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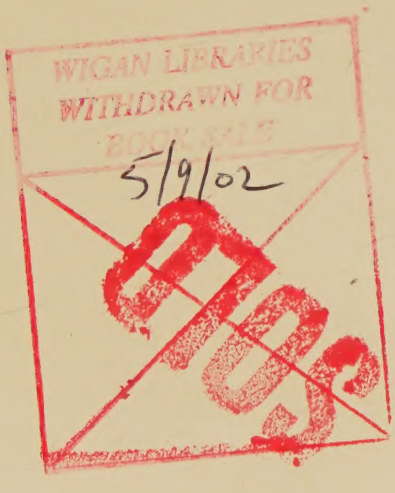
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GENERAL COMMITTEE, JUNE, 1907.

THE

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OF THE

LEIGH FRIENDLY CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED.

1857—1907.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, GIVING A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF LEIGH BEFORE CO-OPERATION, AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS OF THE OLD SILK WEAVERS.

BY

THOMAS BOYDELL.

Manchester:
CO-OPERATIVE PRINTING SOCIETY LIMITED, 118, CORPORATION STREET.
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PREFACE.

THE history of the Co-operative Movement in Leigh, during the fifty years of its existence, is so closely connected with the history and condition of the town itself and its inhabitants, or at any rate so far as regards the condition of the working classes, that it seemed desirable, by way of introduction, to give a brief account of the same for a number of years prior to the introduction of co-operation.

Leigh is greatly in need of a historian. There is no connected record of local events prior to the publication of the local papers, the first of which was published in 1848 under the title of *The Leigh Advertiser*, and was continued as a four-page monthly for one year only; being edited by Mr. Thomas Halliwell. After this there is an interval of three years, when in January, 1852, the *Leigh Chronicle* commences, also as a monthly, and continues until July, 1855, when it commences as a weekly, and has continued as such to the present day. The *Leigh Times* commenced in 1871 and the *Leigh Journal* in 1873, the two being amalgamated as the present-day *Leigh Journal and Times* in 1875.

There is also that exceedingly interesting book, compiled by the late Mr. Josiah Rose, who was for some years editor of the *Leigh Chronicle*, which gives

us a glimpse of the parochial life of the town in the eighteenth century.

It was not, however, until 1848, when the *Leigh Advertiser* was first published, that we get any connected record of the life of the town. A monthly magazine was published by a committee of the Leigh Mechanics' Institution, which consists of twelve numbers, from November, 1844, to October, 1845. These twelve numbers are bound in one volume, the only copy of which is in the Leigh Free Library.

During the years 1875 to 1883 Mr. Josiah Rose published in the *Leigh Chronicle* a large number of interesting notes, which contain many references to the district in olden times. These notes were contributed mainly by Mr. Rose, Mr. W. D. Pink, and the Rev. Canon Stanning.

It is not to be considered that these introductory notes and extracts are intended as any attempt at a historical review of Leigh.

They are simply intended as an introduction to a brief history of the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society; and are more particularly designed to give some account of the condition of the silk weavers in the district prior to the commencement of the Society, because the inception of the Society is due mainly to these same silk weavers; and it was thought that some account of their trials and troubles might be interesting to present-day readers. What is stated in reference to the silk trade consists mainly of extracts from a pamphlet published in 1845, dealing with the question of "unjust abatements"; also of reports of

numerous meetings of the weavers, held from time to time, and reported very fully in the *Leigh Chronicle;* from an article written by the late Mr. Thomas Hope, of Atherton, in the "Bee," the Leigh Technical School Students' Magazine; these being supplemented by the recollections of old silk weavers, still living, to whom the compiler of these notes is deeply indebted.

So far as regards the history of the Society, which has had a more chequered career than perhaps any other society in the country, owing to its productive departments, it would require the pen of a Holyoake to do full justice to it. The writer's difficulty has not been from lack of material, but rather how to condense the mass of information at his disposal into reasonable limits.

The story as it is told is a plain record of facts, without any attempt at literary embellishment, such being outside the capacity of the writer.

Special thanks are due to many old members of the Society, and old silk weavers, who have assisted by giving their personal recollections. Several of these have departed hence, from the troubles of this life, since being interviewed; may they rest in peace, and their good works live after them.

THOS. BOYDELL.

Leigh, August, 1907.

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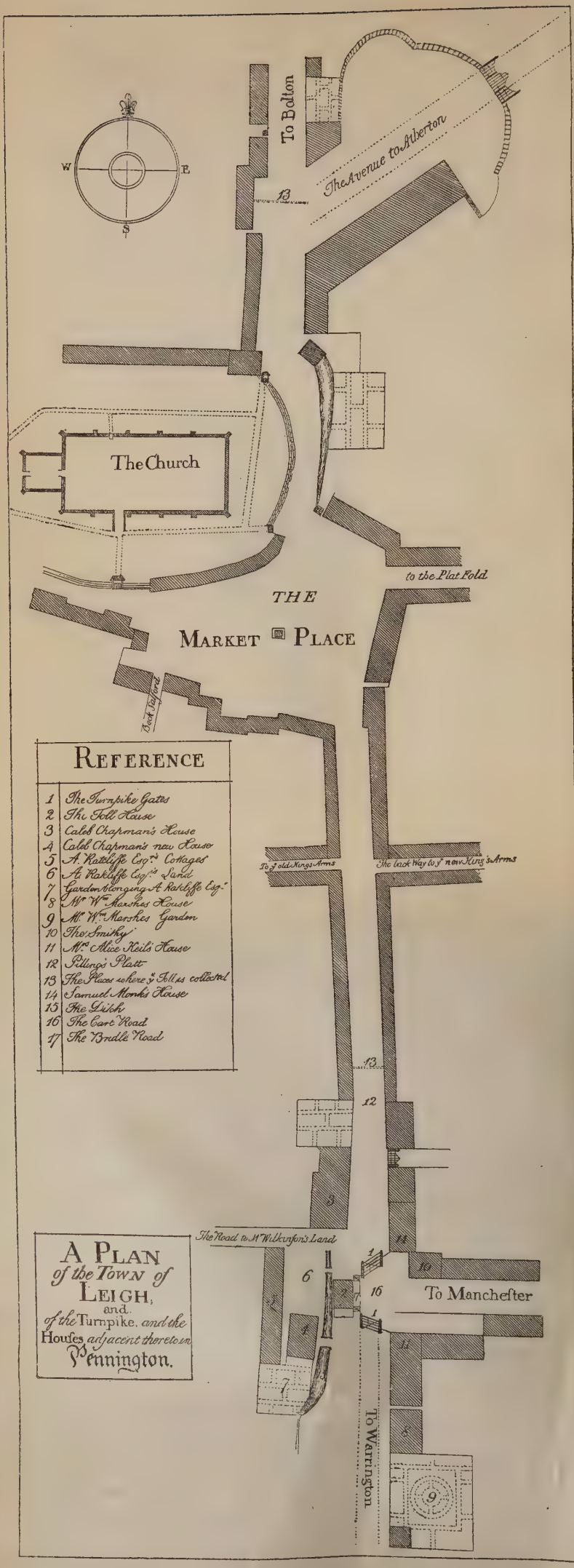

REFERENCE

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2	The Toll House
3	Caleb Chapman's House
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5	A. Ratcliffe Esqr's Cottages
6	A. Ratcliffe Esqr's Land
7	Garden Adjoyning A. Ratcliffe Esqr
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INTRODUCTION.

LEIGH BEFORE CO-OPERATION.

The Condition of the Working People Generally.

ALL who are acquainted with history will know that the industrial life of the country, prior to the rise of co-operation, was in a very sad state. The condition of the working classes was little less than that of slavery. Their earnings being barely sufficient to keep body and soul together, much less to enable them to live with any degree of comfort; their lives being passed in one continual struggle for existence, without any ray of hope for anything brighter or better in the future. Long hours of work, low wages and dear food combined to bring about a state of things which became intolerable.

Holyoake, in his "History of Co-operation," in speaking of the condition of the working classes, quotes the following statute of Edward VI., in which it was enacted that—"If any person shall bring to two justices of the peace any runagate servant, or any other which liveth idly or loiteringly, by the space of three days, they shall cause that idle and loitering

servant or vagabond to be marked with a hot iron on the breast with the mark of V, and adjudge him to be slave to the same person that brought him, for two years after; who shall take the said slave and give him bread, water or small drink, and refuse him meat, and cause him to work, by beating, chaining or otherwise, in such work as he shall put him unto, be it never so vile; and if he shall absent himself from his said master, by the space of fourteen days, then he shall be adjudged by two justices of the peace to be marked on the forehead, or the ball of the cheek, with a hot iron, with a sign of an S, and further shall be adjudged to be slave to his said master for ever."

Professor Rogers tells us that in 1835 six Dorsetshire labourers were convicted of the offence of combining for the purpose of raising wages. They were sentenced to transportation, and were practically sold as slaves for the term of their transportation to an Australian planter. The act for which they were punished was a perfectly innocent one, and even a legal one, for, after a stir had been made about the sentence, the men were pardoned, though considerable difficulties were made in getting them back to England.

At this time the wages of the working people and their general condition was stated to be, on the whole, worse than it has ever been in recorded history; and that the factory hand and the peasant were worse off than the artisan. They seem to have been driven to the barest subsistence.

The wages of the artisan averaged 18s. a week, and the farm labourer about 10s.

The prices of things consumed by the labourer, taken one with another, were nearly double what they are now.

In 1840 Mr. Slaney informed the public that "In Liverpool, in 1839, there were 7,860 cellars used as dwellings, inhabited by 39,000 people, or one-seventh of the population of the town. In Manchester and Salford also a considerable portion of the population inhabited cellars. Out of 37,000 habitations which were examined, no less

than 18,400 were ill furnished and 10,400 altogether without furniture. In Bury, the population of which is 20,000, the dwellings of 3,000 families were visited. In 773 of them the families slept three and four in a bed; in 200, four and five slept in a bed; in 67, five and six slept in a bed; and in 15, six and seven slept in a bed. In Newcastle-on-Tyne the residences of 26,000 poor persons were examined, and those who saw them gave a most appalling account of the misery, filth and want of air which prevailed."

Mr. Sharman Crawford, M.P. for Rochdale, said "That in that town there were 136 persons living on 6d. per week, 200 on 10d., 508 on 1s., 855 on 1s. 6d., and 1,500 on 1s. 10d. Of these five-sixths had scarcely a blanket among them. 85 families had no blanket, and 46 had only chaff beds, without any covering at all."

Mr. P. Stewart, in 1841, quoted a letter from Johnstone, in Scotland, which said: "I could tell you of mothers dividing a farthing and a halfpenny worth of potatoes among a family of seven; of others mixing sawdust with oatmeal in making their porridge, to enable them each to have a mouthful; and for families living for ten days on beans and peas, and ears of wheat stolen by the children from the neighbouring fields."

Many people living in Leigh to-day can tell us of the constant round of oatmeal porridge and water for dinner. One weaver told the writer that he became so tired of the porridge that one day, when it was sent to him at the mill where he worked, he threw it out of the window, and was without dinner altogether. Tea, or so-called tea, was often made out of black currant leaves, balm leaves, and others taken from the gardens.

Mr. Cobden, in June, 1842, said: "In Stockport 29 large concerns were closed."

Dr. Bowring declared that at Bolton "one-third only of the rated property was paying the poor rates,

and there were 10,000 persons who had not 1s. each a week to live upon."

Mr. Joseph Hulme, M.P., said—in July, 1842—that "what the people complained of was that food was high and wages were low, whilst thousands and tens of thousands had no wages at all."

Here is an extract from a speech of the cool-headed and accurate Richard Cobden, delivered also in July, 1842, in the House of Commons :—

> "I see the hon. member for Leeds in his place, and I challenge him to say whether the condition of Leeds at this moment is not worse than that of Stockport. We have not 40,000 utterly unemployed; our poor rates are not so high. His borough must be one vast poorhouse. At Hinckley there are 1,500 stocking frames, and only 21 fully employed. What is the state of the mines in Staffordshire? There are 25,000 utterly destitute of employment. I know at this time a place where 100 wedding rings were pawned in one week to provide the owners with bread. Men and women have subsisted upon boiled nettles; and in the neighbourhood with which I was originally connected in business—Burnley—the starving people dug up the putrid carcase of a cow, rather than die of hunger."

We may fairly assume that the inhabitants of this district were in an equally deplorable condition, with those of the rest of the country, as portrayed in the foregoing.

Copyright.] THE OLD SMITHY (Corner of Bradshawgate and Market Street). [*Photo.*, 1863.

LEIGH IN 1848.

The following interesting description of Leigh in 1848 is from an article in the *Daily News*, entitled, "A Walk Amongst the Workers of Leigh," and was reprinted in the *Leigh Advertiser* of May, 1848 :—

> "Leigh is a market town and parish in the Wapentake and Hundred of West Derby, the Division of Warrington, the polling district of Newton-in-Makerfield, and the Poor-Law Union of Leigh.
>
> "The number of statute acres is 11,969. There are six townships in the parish—Atherton, Astley, Bedford, Pennington, Tyldesley-cum-Shakerley and Westleigh.
>
> "The place, as its name implies, is in a low situation ; it is at the bottom of a flat, at the foot of the slope called Chowbent ; bent here signifying the bend or side of an eminence. So much for the situation, limits and name of place.
>
> "The principal branches of employment are cotton and silk weaving by hand ; cotton and silk weaving by power ; spinning and other descriptions of factory work. There are several large and handsome mills here, and nail making, but that being chiefly carried on at Chowbent will not be further noticed at present. The town of Leigh is situated in parts of the three townships of Westleigh, Bedford and Pennington, and is chiefly formed by the dwellings of drapers, provision dealers, butchers, publicans, and other trades people, clustering around a quaint old church, and a free school, and forming two streets, each meeting at right angles.
>
> "The people, I should think, are never very healthy ; the air they breathe is thick and humid ; the ground is juicy wet, and the fields and pastures are deeply grown and luxuriant ;

beautiful to behold, but not healthful to dwell amidst. Hence typhus fever and English cholera are running riot here at the present time. Food, or the want of food, with anxiety of mind, have, doubtless, much influence in these disorders; but recently many cases have occurred, where people in comfortable circumstances, the best of food, the best clothing, the most likely, judging from appearance, for surviving either sickness or want, have been seized by one of these disorders, and the next day or so been in their coffins.

"The townships of Astley and Bedford I should deem peculiarly liable to these visitations. The land is spongy black soil lying betwixt the high and dry ridges of Tyldesley Banks and Worsley, and the great black Chat Moss. The fields, as I said, are green—brilliantly green. The looming old lanes, deep and shady, winding and turning ever through woods and meadows and ploughed lands, dark and rich and fat; with wild hops, and bines, and hazels, and dog rose bushes overhanging. Talk of emerald gems indeed! Why, here they are! Here are 'gems and diamonds,' too, to one's heart's content—and more, to one's bewilderment and confusion; for, we upland dwellers cannot well brook to go meandering for hours through these gloaming shades, walking as it were in blindness, and not knowing when we shall come out, or where we shall emerge. It is too rich; it is too darkly verdant; the trees, the standing pools, the old cottage walls, the stumps, the rails, the field gates, are often greened over with a humid vegetation which, at this time of year, and in this showery weather, hangs dripping with gems enough for all the poets that ever wrote."

This glowing description of our good old town is almost enough to take one's breath away. Fancy the change in less than sixty years time. There are, no doubt, many people living to-day who will have a clear recollection of the condition of things at that time.

What a happy time it would have been for the hundreds of handloom silk weavers, who constituted the bulk of the inhabitants, if they had not been compelled to work from early morning to late at night to enable them to earn barely sufficient to keep body and soul together. Their time was too much occupied in keeping themselves and their children from starvation to give them any opportunity of thinking of and enjoying the beauties of nature which were all around them.

The parish of Leigh contained, according to 1831 Census, 20,083 inhabitants; in 1841, 22,245.

The first public educational institution in the town, apart from the elementary day schools, appears to have been that of the Mechanics' Institution, established in 1842 (January 2nd), which was held in the rooms over the premises in Newton-street, which now overlook the open space in front of the new Town Hall. The Institution had, in 1848, a membership of 192, and a library consisting of nearly 900 vols., and a reading-room "supplied with 20 of the leading periodicals of the day." At one time the library contained about 1,200 vols.

There appears to have been a library in the town prior to the one belonging to the Mechanics' Institution, for some of the books of the institution had labels in them with the name "Leigh Philanthropic Library." Some of the books from the library of the institution were handed over to the co-operative society's library, and are still in use. As mentioned previously the institution issued a monthly magazine during one year, 1844-5. This magazine contains several exceedingly interesting articles, and contains a picture of Atherton Hall, formerly the seat of Lord Lilford, which was demolished in 1825. It contains also a graphic account of the burning of Westhoughton Factory in 1812 by the operatives, because of the introduction of machinery. A quotation from a report of the institution's objects and work is peculiarly interesting at the present time :—

> "The departments of knowledge which constitute the staple instruction of these establish-

ments are such as afford a qualification for the business and intercourse of common life; while those that prepare man for higher intellectual pursuits are not neglected, and the cultivation of the moral and social affections is diligently inculcated. The introduction, however, of peculiar religious tenets, either of the Church of England, or of sects, is carefully avoided; because it is well known that, among individuals professing various creeds, the seeds of religious dissension would thus be sown, and the utility of the institution to the general mass of a population would be destroyed. But it is said, in pursuance of the same objection, that the members of a Mechanics' Institution *are not taught to say their prayers*. This must surely be regarded by every reflecting person as very frivolous. The teachers are generally not of a class who have 'taken upon themselves the office of the ministry' or who 'arrogate to themselves the right of dictating to others as to the eternal destinies of their souls.' How singularly inconsistent, therefore, in the parties connected with these schools, to object to other societies for professedly omitting to teach things which they themselves profess to teach and still neglect, viz., religious creeds and prayers."

And in the first number of the *Leigh Advertiser*, dated February, 1848, appears the following notice:—

"Secular Education.—A petition praying Parliament to pass an Act for the establishment of a general system of secular education throughout the County Palatine of Lancaster, to be supported by local rates (levied on the same assessment as the poor rate), and managed by local authorities elected by the ratepayers specially for the purpose, has been prepared by the Lancashire Public Schools Association. All persons desirous of promoting this measure may sign the petition at our office (*The Advertiser*), where they will remain a few days."

There is an interesting article on the "Tradition of Morley's Hall," and several articles describing "Rambles in the Neighbourhood of Leigh," starting from Dick Mather Bridge and proceeding across Deakin's Lea, past "Bacon Bridge" (Breaston Bridge) then to the right past Hope Carr, Bonny-well Farm, Greenfold, Landside, Pocket-nook, with the "Fairy-house," to Lowton Common and along the high road back to Leigh. The articles are written in a very chatty style, and interesting details are given of the various places mentioned. Speaking of Lowton, the writer says: "Perhaps there is no place in the vicinity of Leigh where the manners of the inhabitants have undergone a greater change, within the last fourteen or fifteen years, than Lowton Common. About that time (1830) nearly all were employed in weaving muslins, and as a manufacturer resided in the village who found them all work, and as there were provision shops, &c., near, they had very little, if any, intercourse with Leigh. 'Saint Monday' used to be strictly kept, as there was scarcely a loom going on that day throughout the year. In the summer it was usually spent in running, jumping, wrestling, and fighting; and in winter in skating, kicking the football, and other hardy sports. It is not to be wondered at that they became proficients at these practices, and consequently let no opportunity slip of exhibiting their prowess. If they happened to come to Leigh during the fairs or other pastimes, it was generally in gangs of eight or ten, and many a piece of wanton mischief was committed, and many a bloody battle fought on these occasions. But the time now arrived when silk was introduced into their workshops, and was the cause of an entire change in their habits. The pieces (cuts) were so long that they could not finish them in a week, and consequently were obliged to work on Mondays the same as on other days. They had likewise to attend the warehouses at Leigh with their

work, hence a more familiar intercourse was gradually generated and a kinder feeling called forth between the workmen of the different neighbourhoods, and the bickering and ill blood have happily disappeared. The Weavers of Lowton Common have turned their thoughts other ways, and some of the most beautiful beds of tulips, pinks, and dahlias may be seen here, at the proper season of the year, that can be seen anywhere in the country."

On arriving near Leigh he speaks of Pennington Hall as being "formerly the residence of S. Cheetham Hilton, Esq., who, in 1802, added a new wing to the south side of the hall. It is supposed that it was his intention to build one on the other side also, but he was prevented by death, and the property passed into other hands. This is a delightful spot—tall oak and beech trees surround it, while beautiful evergreen shrubs and flower beds, laid out in the most tasteful manner, show that no pains have been spared to render it one of the most interesting places that our neighbourhood can boast of. Adjoining Pennington Hall there was formerly a corn mill, moved by water power. After several partial conflagrations, it was at length burnt entirely to the ground, in the spring of 1829. Its site, together with that of the "dam," &c., was planted over with young trees, so that no vestige of the mill now remains. A dispute between a former miller and the "Squire" was the occasion of a windmill being erected about two hundred yards nearer Leigh, but the owner shortly became insolvent. The mill was pulled down, and a row of houses, still called the Windmill Houses, was built from the materials. The toll-bar, formerly standing in Leigh, has been removed to the end of the Windmill Houses, and between here and the canal bridge the road has been considerably improved, several unsightly old houses have been pulled down, and new ones of a more substantial appear-

ance have been erected in their stead, so that this end of the town has been very much improved of late years."

In this same book there is also a remarkable article under the heading "Leigh in 1944," which is put in the form of a dream. Many surprising predictions are given, amongst them being that Market-street—which was at the time of the dream exceedingly narrow—had become a "wide, magnificent street;" there were no chimnies to be seen; gas was manufactured from water and not coal.

The most interesting article, however, in the book is in the form of a letter, under the *nom de plume* of "Veritas," which gives a vivid description of the condition of the town and people thirty, or forty years prior to the date of the letter, which was written in 1844, and was in reply to the account of the dream just referred to. The following is the letter in full:—

"LEIGH AS IT WAS.

To the Editors of the "Leigh Magazine":

Gentlemen,—In the last number of your periodical there appeared a fanciful article entitled 'Leigh in 1944.' Many surprising improvements are supposed to have taken place in our little town during the next century; and when we recollect what actually has occurred, I will not say in the last hundred years, but in the last thirty or forty years, the article in question will not appear to be overdrawn. Thirty years have not yet passed away since there stood, in King-street, a large, gloomy-looking building; the doors were thickly studded with nail heads; the yard gates were surmounted with iron spikes, and the small, diamond-paned windows were intersected every few inches with a course of brickwork, or almost literally lined with iron stanchions: this was the parish poorhouse; this the place where

'Poor weeping widows, with unheeded tears,
And crippled age, with more than childish fears;
The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they—
The moping idiot and the madman gay'

were incarcerated; and certainly the idea of a disgusting 'prison house' could not have been better carried out.

On the site now occupied by the Town Hall stood the stocks and dungeon, and in an open space near, the inhabitants carried on the barbarous '*sports*' of bull-baiting and cock-fighting. It was to this place that 'Bill Marsh,' the village poet, invited

'All Chowbenters to come with their dogs,
Never minding their clothes, their shoes, nor their clogs;'

and it was in this place, at these times, that the most brutal actions took place, and the most blasphemous language was used that the mind of man can conceive.

A little further on stood a public nuisance in the form of a 'toll-bar,' and, instead of the good-looking buildings that now form Market-street, low thatched hovels, with clay or brick floors, presented their 'dingy fronts.' The appearance of the town was even worse in the Market-place than anywhere else; the 'old pendices,' as they were called, were a range of ugly-looking buildings employed as butchers' shambles, barbers' shops, &c., and stood in the place where the churchyard wall now stands, and extended from opposite the 'King's Head' nearly to the Grammar School. A still greater improvement has taken place in the manners of the inhabitants than in the appearance of the town. Thirty years ago, no well-dressed person, particularly a female, could go through the streets without being insulted, at least half a dozen times, by the 'unshaved'

loungers at the street ends or the half-tipsy clown issuing from the public-house. There was not a booksellers' shop or a circulating library in the town; at the same time there were twenty-two licensed public-houses, and the landlords boasted they were generally well accustomed. There was scarcely a Saturday night in the year but one or more fights—and those of the most disgraceful kind, too—took place. It was quite common to see parties issue from a public-house, and stripping themselves naked, to commence striking, kicking, and even biting each other in the most ferocious manner, and, after one had 'given in,' to go again into the alehouse and talk over the affair in the most commonplace way; and, indeed, to be able to beat any man of his 'height and weight' in the town was thought, among a certain class, to be one of the highest attainments at which a young man could arrive. When George IV. was crowned a large quantity of liquor was given in the streets, and there were upwards of twenty fights, at one and the same time, in Leigh Market-place. Ought we not to be thankful that this brutal practice is so far diminished as to be almost reckoned among 'the things that were.'

I will just mention one thing more that was greatly practised thirty years ago, and that is gaming on the Sabbath day. Boys of fourteen or fifteen years of age, and even grown-up persons, might be observed in groups of twenty or thirty playing at pitch and toss, or 'shaking in the hat,' in any of the sequestered spots about the town on a Sunday afternoon or night; and it would have delighted George Cruikshank to have seen them scampering, one this way and another that, over hedge and ditch, on the appearance of the church-wardens' staff, or if the constable happened to be walking that way, along with his red-faced, good-tempered *rib*. These things are passed away; Sunday schools, cheap reading,

and—though 'last, not least,'—mechanics' institutions have wrought a mighty change for the better among our labouring population; and onward, still onward, is the word, till what Leigh will be in 1944 will perhaps surpass the imaginings of your ingenious though dreamy correspondent.

Yours truly,

VERITAS."

The old Town Hall was erected in 1840, and was considered a very handsome building. It answered for a long time as Poor Law Guardians' meeting room, and Petty Sessions and County Court House; and it was here where nearly all the bazaars, concerts, balls and public meetings were held. At that time there was a large gallery at one end.

A portion of the old workhouse in King-street, which was erected in 1695, is still standing, but it is expected that it will shortly be entirely demolished for the new street which it is proposed to make from King-street to Ellesmere-street. The first portion of the new workhouse, in Leigh-road, was erected about 1852.

On reading through the early numbers of the *Leigh Advertiser* and *Leigh Chronicle*, one comes across many very interesting records. In February, 1848, appears an advertisement offering shares for sale in the Leigh Gas Light Co., "which is now become a profitable investment." Gas making began in Leigh about 1846. The George and Dragon Inn, which was kept by James Hampson, advertises "*Home* Brewed Ales." A grand miscellaneous concert by the Bolton Philharmonic Society is also advertised to be held in the "Assembly Room" of the same inn.

In April, 1848, a correspondent says he "could not believe that the occupants of houses and shops in Market-street could long rest satisfied without their footpaths being flagged."

We gather from the *Leigh Advertiser*, of April and December, 1848, that the following were some of the public officials and representatives at that time:—

Treasurer for the Leigh Union: Mr. John Fletcher.

The following were the newly-elected Guardians :—

Astley : Christopher Isherwood and Arnold Johnson.
Atherton : James Burton, Wm. Wood, Thos. Hope.
Bedford : Samuel Young, John Woodcock.
Culcheth : Michael Paul, sen., Wm. Lawton.
Golborne : Wm. Reeves, Richard Calland.
Kenyon : Henry Clayton.
Lowton : Thos. Warder, Henry Fraser.
Pennington : Jno. Thorp, Charles Anderton,
Tyldesley : Henry Mort, Joseph Harwood.
Westleigh : Richard Marsh, Richard Leigh.
John Stock Turner Green was elected chairman, and Jno. Thorpe and Wm. Wood vice-chairmen.

At meetings of ratepayers for Pennington and Westleigh, the following appointments were made :—

For the Township of Pennington, T. T. Hayes presiding :

Overseers : Henry Calland, Peter Yates.
Assessor : Thos. Brideoake.
Churchwarden : Thos. Brideoake.
Surveyor of Highways : Jas. Richardson.

Township of Westleigh, Thos. Leigh presiding :

Overseers : Henry Isherwood, Richd. Leigh.
Assessors : Richd. Leigh, Chas. Hampson.
Churchwarden : Thos. Leigh.
Surveyor of Highways : Richd. Leigh.

The following were the officers appointed by the Court Leet :—

Tryers of Weights and Measures—Rd. Greenough, Fred Williams, Peter Wright.
Affeerers—Rd. Greenough, Geo. Pennington, Ed. Marsh, Wm. Boardman, Thos. Norris, Henry Calland.
Scavengers—Henry Calland, Robt. Smith, Thos. Norris, Fred Williams, Geo. Pennington.

Burleymen—Wm. Boardman, Wm. Johnson, Ed. Marsh, Rd. Greenough, Henry Calland.
Inspector of Nuisances and Bailiff—Thos. Darwell.

In 1851 the population of the Parish of Leigh had risen from 22,245 in 1841 to 26,000.

In the first number of the *Leigh Chronicle* (January, 1852) there is a piece of poetry written in the Lancashire dialect, which is well worth copying in full, and is as follows :—

"TUT TH' YEDDITUR UT KRONNIKLE.

'I wur greadly weel pleased when I heerd t'other day,
As you wur bringin eawt summat i'th newspaper way;
So I thowt to mysel, I'll wroite you a letter—
It'll do furt' crom in, if yo'n nowt onny bettur.

An I know, Mester Yedditur, yo'ar th' reet soart of a chap,
Furt' set it agooin, beawt onny mishap;
An I think teawn o'Leighth's gettun quoite big enugh,
Furt' fill a newspappur wi' plenty o' stuff.

As it nobbut cums eawt wonst a munth, dun yo see,
Ther's no stamp tax put on't—fur so they tell'n me;
Furt' Judges e Lunnun ha troied it i'th koort,
Beawt a buk o' Charles Dickun's, ur summat ut soort.

Yoa mun crom in aw th' news, boath i'th teawn and eawt;
Kecko-lone, Tinsley Bongs, an aw th' teawns reawnd abeawt—
Ther's Lowton, un Bedford, Chowbent, Westleigh Mill,
Wheere ther's shure't be summut up, oather fur good ur fur ill.

Yoa mun tell us aw abeawt th' Police and Teawn's-haw,
Wheer they gettun sent to Kurto for breaking th' Queen's law;
But it raly beats aw, as foak han no moor sense,
To get into sich hobbles, un lots o' expense.

Ther's th' meetins ut Workheause should also be known,
Boord o' Gardeners they cawn um—just deawn Kecko-
lone;
Less ado met ha sarved um than sich a big heause,
Fur I'm shure it has tan a rare seet o' brass.

But enough abeawt th' teawn's tawk—I shud lioke wurd
be sent,
What they'r dooin at Lunnun, ut meeting at Parlament;
Fur ut Parlament Heause ther's shure t' be a tussle,
When th' new Form Bill's browt in be Lord Johnny
Russell.

Ther's th' Furrin News, tu, boath fro France un fro
Russia,
Fro th' African Gaffers—un Turkey un Prussia;
When ther's owt sturrin partikler—revolution or battle—
Yoa con get th' news be leetnin—it'll cum wi' a rattle.

If you'l tell us aw this—I could make a good guess,
It'll gu off reet well, and meet wi' success;
And I'll make a prediction—I'll not be far wrung,
It'll have furt' cum eawt every wick afore lung.

But, Mestur Yedditur, I think its gettun quoite toime,
Furt' bring tu a close this bad spellin un roime;
So ther's wishun you aw a happy new year,
Wi' good wishes fort' pappur—I'll soign my name here—

Doctur's Nuk, e Leigth. TIM BOBBIN, junr."

In a volume of genealogical and historical notes, which were edited by Mr. Josiah Rose, and reprinted from the *Leigh Chronicle*, appears a very interesting map showing the central part of Leigh, about 1762, on which is marked the position of the "Turnpike Gates" at the end of Bradshawgate; also toll bars in Market-street and Bridge-street. An open ditch "stretched along King-street between the present sites of the White Horse and the Manchester and Liverpool District Bank." and another open ditch "extended across the Market-place from about the Boar's Head to the Pied Bull," and "stretching across the Market-place, from east to

west, and forming part of the boundry of the churchyard is shown the old 'Penthouses' or 'Pendices' referred to in the letter of 'Veritas.'" The same position is occupied by the butchers at the present day.

In the *Leigh Chronicle* of September, 1852, there is a report of a case of highway robbery, which it is stated "was committed in the 'New-road' which has lately been cut from the top of Bradshawgate, across one field into Chapel-street, Bedford;" this would be the beginning of what is now called Queen-street. Bradshawgate in earlier days seems to have been called "Windmill-street."

In February, 1852, we find that the Town Hall gets a new clock by public subscription; and is also beautified. It is stated that "The Town Hall, from being the dirtiest place in the town, has been transformed into one of the neatest and most respectable of public buildings."

In the following July it is stated that "the clock had not yet been paid for."

In the same year, at a vestry meeting, it was decided "that the course of the footpath from Union-street to Bedford should be improved."

This would have reference to the northerly side of Bradshawgate, and it was not until 1862 that it was decided to flag Bradshawgate, as it was then stated that "the thoroughfare was becoming a very important one, and would be still more so when the new railway was completed."

There were also complaints in 1853 of there being no footpath on the westerly side of King-street, between the Town Hall and Twist-lane.

Amongst other notices in 1852 we find an advertisement of a Temperance Hotel kept by Mr. W. Ackers; also what appears to be the first announcement of the firm of "Picksley and Sims," and, more interesting still, that the Leigh Gas Co. had reduced the price of gas from 5s. 10d. to 5s.

There is also a letter from a correspondent asking for a "water cart for Pennington." It states that "a few weeks ago the inhabitants of Leigh were agreeably

surprised by the appearance of a water cart alaying the dust in the streets; but, unfortunately, it turned out that this real boon was only temporary, the cart having been borrowed. Could not the township of Pennington purchase one of these carts? I am sure no ratepayer could reasonably object to so trifling an amount of expenditure. The dust during some periods is really intolerable."

It is interesting to mention that the first watering cart owned by the township was made a few years later by Mr. John Smith, the present respected president of our society who was at that time working as a wheelwright at a workshop on the site now occupied by a portion of the new Rope and Anchor Hotel.

A reference to the matter of the water cart was made at the Pennington Township meeting in March 1856, when it was proposed to spend £10 on a water cart, and it was stated that "the same cart would do for collecting street refuse." The farmers of Landside turned up in large force and opposed this reckless expenditure. One of them called out "you had better buy us a roller, and come and roll our land; and another, "you had better make us our hay."

The doughty champions of economy are not yet extinct in Landside.

About this time there was a great outcry against the action of the then Vicar of Leigh, the Rev. James Irvine, for refusing Christian burial in a number of cases; and this led to the opening of a fund for the erection of a new church at Pennington, which was completed and opened in 1854.

In this same year we have the opening of the first commercial bank. This was the Manchester and Liverpool District Bank, which was worked for about twenty years as a branch of the Warrington Bank, and was opened two days each week in a shop now used as a stationer's shop, and immediately opposite their present handsome building in King-street.

In April, 1854, the first Leigh Cricket Club was formed, the following advertisement appearing in the *Leigh Chronicle* :—

"The Leigh Cricket Club.

"The above club will be opened on Monday next, the 3rd inst., members to be in attendance at half-past four o'clock in the afternoon. Persons wishing to become members of the Leigh Cricket Club are requested to make application to J. H. Gaskell, secretary, Post Office, Leigh.

"Subscriptions—Honorary members, 10s. 6d. per annum. Ordinary members, 2s. 6d. entrance fee and 1s. per lunar month, payable in advance. 1st April, 1854."

It will, perhaps, interest our present-day players to give the full reports of the first two matches as they appear in the *Chronicle*—

"Cricket.—The first match of the Leigh Cricket Club was played on Thursday, the 16th ult., with the second eleven of the Wigan and Ince Club, on the ground of the latter. Notwithstanding the very unfavourable state of the weather, the wickets were pitched at half-past eleven o'clock and the game commenced at twelve, which terminated in favour of the Wigan and Ince players, in one innings, with five runs to spare. The play exhibited by the Wigan eleven was remarkably good, especially that of the Scotts. The fielding on the Leigh side was excellent, considering the short time the club has been established.

"The following is the score :—

LEIGH.

1st Innings.		2nd Innings.	
Taylor, b E. Scott	0	b Scott	2
Jee, b McLeod	0	c Taylor, b Scott	10
Malins, not out	9	b McLeod	0
Charleson, c Settle, b Scott	0	run out	1
Gaskell, c and b McLeod	4	run out	2
George, c Daglash, b Scott	1	run out	0
Bryce, b McLeod	0	c Daglash, b Scott	1
Lawton, c Daglash	3	not out	6
Turner, run out	0	c E. Scott, b Drew	1
Crawshaw, run out	0	c E. Scott, b Drew	1
Tickle, b Scott	0	c T. Scott, b E. Scott	1
Byes 1, wides 5	6	Byes 1, wides 3	4
	23		29

WIGAN AND INCE.

1st Innings.

McLeod, b Jee	5
Mayhew, b Charleson	10
E. Scott, c and b Jee	10
G. Daglash, c Charleson	1
Rowbottom, b Charleson	4
T. Scott, not out	19
Drew, b Malins	0
Ackerley, c Bryce, b Malins	0
Settle, b Malins	1
Taylor, b Malins	0
Fallows, run out	5
Byes 1, wides 1	2
	57"

The following is the report of the second match, which was on Leigh ground, but it does not state where the ground was :—

"On Monday last (September, 1854) a match was played between the Leigh and Bickershaw Cricket Clubs, on the ground of the former, amidst a large concourse of spectators, including a goodly portion of the fair sex. Amongst the Bickershaw players may be mentioned the batting of Grundy, who ran his score up to 22 in the first innings in a very efficient manner; whilst on the Leigh side, the admirable manner in which Jee handled his bat caused the bursts of applause to be loud and frequent, as he made some of his beautiful drives over the heads of the spectators.

"By adding 46 to the score, he decided the game in favour of Leigh, though they could not be said to win the game in one innings, as they wanted two to beat; there is, however, little doubt that this would have been obtained without the fall of a wicket, so we may consider they won, with 10 wickets to go down. The late hour prevented them going in for their second innings, and the Bickershaw *gave in.*

"Subjoined is the score :—

BICKERSHAW.

1st Innings.		2nd Innings.	
France, c and b Jee	1	b Gaskell	4
Ackers, b Jee	0	b Millward	4
Aspinall, b Jee	0	b Widdows	1
Langford, c and b Widdows	0	c Millward, b Gaskell	7
Dove, run out	0	lg.b.w., b Malins	1
Grundy, b Jee	22	lg.b.w., b Malins	2
Mares, b Widdows	0	lg.b.w., b Malins	3
Carlton, c Jee, b Widdows	1	c Bryce, b Malins	2
Harrison, not out	13	run out	6
Davis, b Jee	0	not out	0
Clarkson, c Bryce, b Malins	1	b Charleson	2
Wides 2, no ball 1	3	Byes 3, wides 3, no balls 2	8
Total	41	Total	40

LEIGH.

1st Innings.	
Gaskell, run out	2
George, run out	1
Widdows, b Carlton	0
Willward, tip-on-w, b Langford	6
Jee, b Langford	46
Malins, tip-on-w, b Grundy	6
Charleson, tip-on-w, b Langford	5
Bryce, lg.b.w., b Grundy	2
Tickle, b Grundy	8
Gollorgor, b Grundy	1
Thorp, not out	1
Bye 1, wide 1	2
Total	80"

The following are a few of the noteworthy and interesting events in the life of the town about this time—in chronological order—from the *Leigh Chronicle* reports :—

June, 1854.—Consecration of Christ's Church, Pennington.

August, 1854.—Order received from Her Majesty's Privy Council for the closing of graveyards in the District.

September, 1854.—The first Leigh Burial Board was elected and consisted of the following Messrs. Wm. Hayes, Jno. Fairclough, and Thos. Halliwell for

Pennington; James Diggle Richard Leigh, and Jno. Barton for Westleigh; Wm. Hampson, Saml. Mosscrop and Jno. Jackson for Bedford.

The first interment in the Leigh Cemetery was on October 3 1856 the person being Phoebe Knowles of Bradshawgate.

May, 1855.—Opening of St. Joseph's New Catholic Church, Bedford.

April, 1856.—Ball at the Town Hall in commemoration of the Treaty of peace with Russia.

September, 1857.—Opening of the Tunnel and Basin at Bedford, in connection with Messrs. Fletcher and Co.'s collieries.

August, 1858.—Interesting case in County Court *re* Bellman's rights Gregory *v.* Darwell (Town Cryer).

December, 1858.—Daily service of mails from London and other parts, reaching Leigh at 4-20 p.m., commenced.

December, 1859.—The old obelisk in the Market-place taken down and a new one erected.

July, 1860.—First state visit of the 55th and 60th Rifle Volunteer Corps to the Parish Church.

November, 1860.—First show of The Leigh Agricultural Society.

January, 1861.—Notice in the *Chronicle* of a proposed Bill for supplying with Gas and Water the Townships of Astley, Bedford, Pennington, Tyldesley and Westleigh.

March, 1861.—Meeting of Bedford Ratepayers to promote the adoption of the Lighting and Watching Act.

April, 1863.—Licence granted to Mr. M. Wardhaugh for the opening of the first Theatre in Leigh. The Theatre was on the site now occupied by the Conservative Club.

August, 1863.—Peter, John and Joseph Cleworth, Farmers, summoned for breach of the Lord's Day Act, by making hay on a Sunday. They were fined 5/- and costs. The Magistrates on the Bench were Messrs. A. Sylvester (chairman), T. E. Withington, Richd. Guest, and Ralph Fletcher.

Defendants refused to pay fines and costs and were distrained upon. The case which aroused a vast amount of interest throughout the country, was carried to the Queen's Bench where the conviction was quashed.

September and October, 1863.—Adoption of the Local Govt. Act for the Townships of Pennington, Bedford, Westleigh, Atherton and Tyldesley. The following were the first elected members, on the dates named :—

For Tyldesley.—On October 24th, Messrs. Oliver Burton, John Burton, Jno. Holland, W. E. Manley, Thos. Kirkpatrick, Caleb Wright, Wm. Ramsden, George Green, Roger Worthington, Saml. Sumerfield, Chas. Entwistle, Thos. Sharples, Thos. Cockshout, G. W. Rylance and Thos. Silcock.

For Pennington, on October 31st.—Messrs. Joseph Limon, Richard Greenough, William Johnson, Jas. Richardson, Thos. Brideoake, Henry Calland, Richard Guest, J. B. Bevington, Thos. Halliwell, James Hayes, Thos. Travers Hayes and G. H. Evans.

For Westleigh, on November 12th.—Messrs. Richard Leigh, Thos. Leigh, James Hayes, Richd. Guest, Richd. Barton, Ralph Tunnicliffe, Henry Isherwood, James Diggle and James Brideoake.

For Bedford, on December 5th.—Messrs. Thos. Farnworth, Joseph Kerfoot, John Horrocks, Isaac Taylor, Thos. Prescott, Reuben Sims, Thos. Brideoake, Robt. Guest, Thos. Kirkpatrick, John Jackson, John Green and Thos. Whitehead.

For Atherton, on January 30th, 1864.—Messrs. J. P. Fletcher, Wm. Lewis, Ed. Burton, Thos. Peake, Millin Selby, Ralph Unsworth, T. H. Hope, Wm. Hesketh, Thos. Carr, Thos. Smith, Abraham Burrows, Wm. Hesketh (Manor House), J. D. Selby and J. Croston.

August 24th, 1864.—Opening of the Eccles, Tyldesley, and Wigan Railway, including the branch line from Tyldesley, through Leigh to Kenyon Junction.

October, 1864.—Pennington Local Board acquired possession of the Manorial Tolls from Lord Lilford.
July 13th, 1867.—Abolition of the Pennington and Kirkhall-lane Toll Bars.

The following picture of Leigh in 1864, from the "Lankashire Loominary," reprinted in the *Leigh Chronicle* on June 4th, 1864, will conclude this portion of the introductory sketch :—

> "P'raps a good monny uv eawr readers may know very little abeawt a smaw teawn soome seven miles distant fro' th' classic nayburhood o' Bowtun, cawd Leighth; un p'raps thoose ut do know owt abeawt it, may look on't as so obscure, so poverty-stricken in its associashuns, as to be not wuth tawkin' abeawt. Th' other day we yerd a chap give it 'Wiggin,' because, as he were instructed, no battles wur ever fowt in its vicinity.
>
> "But heere, we beg leov to say, that he wur rung, for we know Leigh weel, have had relayshuns livin' theere and have bin visitin' it at intervals ever sin' it wur possible to get within a hawve a moile on't by rail; un we can testify to havin' seen monny a feight, not a hundred yards fro' th' shadow uv its owd church. We con bear witness, too, to a sertin extent, to th' importance o'th' teawn un to th' conservative karrickter uv its principal inhabitants.
>
> "Modern innovashuns' they mun ha regarded wi' a feelin' nearly akin to that ov abhorrence, for durin' th' last twenty yers there's herdly bin a new buildin' erected; th' toothrey ut have bin stuck up are as plain as a dug kennil; even th' Teawn Haw, within which Hur Majesty's august justices o'th' peace howd their sittins, is as destitute uv architectural ornament as a respectable bern; un except just i'th' vicinity o' this palace o' justice, th' koasies are paved wi' multi-shapt stones, moastly put rung side up, un consequently are wonderfully agreeable to

people ut are blest wi' corns or bunions, or we'd lickert hu said, who wear thin shoon, but we're remoinded that th' Leighners dunnot wear sitch fancy herticles, th' generality o' their soles beein' as delicate as a Bongs lad's buttycake. In useful institushuns it stonds as compared wi' Bag-lone, Little Hulton, Shackerley Common, un other surreawndin' places, awmost in a preeminent position. It has a post-office, or nearly so, th' premises dooin' duty for th' printin', stayshunary, un bookselling bizness as weel; it has also a police office, a cemetry, a werkheawse un a pin-fowt. It has no infirmary or dispensary, but it has a toothrey druggists' shops, in which th' minor operashuns uv surgery are fearlessly attempted. It has some public-heawses un jerry-shops, too; un we're candid enoof to confess that we'n made th' acquaintance uv a glass o' proime ale, booath at th' Whoite Hawse un th' Breawn Keaw. In *sperittual* hee places Puseyism flaunts a bowd front. Occashunally, by way o' remoindin' th' natives that it wur noather deod nor asleep, it has cut its peculiar cantrips, sitch as refusin' to marry or bury people who wur not communicants. We remember, too, that it wonst persuaded a couple ut had bin wed at th' Wesleyan Chapel that their marriage wur a mere unsanctified sham; un so they wur wed o'er again at th' church.

"Leigh, too, is distingwisht in another respect, it boasts a wickly newspapper, a moderately faithful chronicler uv aw its notable local events. Leigh is not, however, a seaport. Th' toide, nevertheless wonst flowed theere very freely, but it wur th' toide uv public opinion, which th' Sunday haymakin' monstrosity set i' motion. There is, or used to be, a packet boat plyin' between Leigh and Worsley, which, fro' its quaint, owd-fashunt appearance, servt beautifully to exemplify th' antique karrickter o'th' place."

THE SILK WEAVERS.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toils,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor."

Prior to 1827 the bulk of the inhabitants of Leigh were employed in weaving various descriptions of cotton goods. There were at that time no mills or foundries in the town with the exception of a small roving mill, as it was called, which was situated at the bottom of Diamond-street, and was kept by a Mr. Leyland; also another similar one at the "Hall Houses," kept by Ann Ratcliffe. In these mills they employed a few weavers (all handloom weaving), but the great bulk of the weaving was done at the workers' own homes, and taken to receiving agents in different parts of the town who acted for Manchester firms, just as was afterwards the case with the silk trade.

About this date several hundreds of weavers had been thrown out of employment, consequent upon cotton goods having been introduced, to a certain extent, into the power-loom factories in other districts. It is stated that "the wages of the cotton weavers, even those who had work, were so extremely low that it was impossible for them to procure the commonest necessaries of life." This, together with the effects of the Truck system and the introduction of the power-loom, caused a fearful amount of destitution in the neighbourhood. The Truck system was a method at that time in vogue by which an employer of labour, instead of paying wages in coin, would give the work-people checks or tokens, which had to be exchanged for goods at certain grocers' or other shops in which the employer was frequently interested, and it is stated that "The Truck system was carried on in Leigh to such an extent that the weavers could scarcely obtain one shilling in money from the warehouse, and by

this system the cotton manufacturers exacted about 12½ per cent from the weavers above what other shops were realizing."

About 1831 an Act was passed "to prohibit the payment in certain trades of wages in goods." This was followed by other similar Acts in 1887 and 1896.

About 1827, it is stated that "an *eminent firm* in the silk trade gave notice to the silk weavers in the Manchester and Middleton districts that their wages must be reduced; in consequence of this the weavers of those districts ceased to work for that firm; a strike was the result, the consequences fearful; other silk masters also reduced their weavers' wages. The mania for reducing wages soon spread through the districts. The masters determined not to be conquered, and the *eminent firm*, hearing of the poverty and destitution in the neighbourhood of Leigh, sent some work, together with some *black sheep* of Middleton (what few could be found) to instruct the wretched and half-starved weavers in the envious art of weaving silk. The work was introduced at one penny per yard below the Manchester and Middleton prices. It was very soon discovered that the Leigh cotton weavers could manage the silk very well, considering they had not seen anything of the kind before, and it was therefore a great inducement for other masters to send their work also."

It was under such circumstances that silk weaving eventually became established in Leigh.

Before the agencies had become thoroughly established in Leigh, many of the weavers tramped all the way to Patricroft and even to Manchester to get warps, and back again with their finished cuts.

The late Mr. Thos. Hope, in an article written by him for the Leigh Technical School Students' Magazine, *The Bee*, gives a very interesting account of the exact circumstances which brought the Leigh people to the notice of the employers in the silk trade, which is worth quoting at length, he says :

"The first consignment of silk goods appears to have been brought on December 27th, 1827, and was a skip of silk brought to Mr. John Sale, who, if I mistake not, was a saddler, and was from the firm of J. Occleston, later Occleston and Hobson."

This firm afterwards kept a receiving place in Atherton Cottage, St. Helens-road, now singularly enough occupied by Mr. F. Le Mare, a descendant of one of the oldest silk firms in Leigh.

Atherton Cottage was for some years the residence of Mr. John Newton, a well-known tradesman, who kept a grocer's and draper's shop in Market-street. Mr. Newton was a very eccentric character; ready to help in every charitable undertaking. The following advertisement which he inserted in the *Leigh Chronicle* is characteristic of him:—

"NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

"On Monday, the 21st March last, a well was christened 'Jacob's Well,' in the garden belonging to John Newton, Atherton Cottage. The sponsors who officiated on that event were fit and proper persons.

"Any traveller, way-faring man, or any person, should he want a cup of good crystal water, may have it freely and cheerfully from that well.

"Atherton Cottage, March 29th, 1854."

On one occasion it is said that he fell down a well in the cellar of his shop in Market-street, and shouted himself hoarse before he was found. Whether this dedication of a well to the public use was a thank-offering for his rescue is not stated.

On another occasion, when there was some excitement in the town, through the soldiers being called in, Newton hid himself for several days in a large cistern over the back kitchen of Atherton Cottage.

Mr. Hope continues—

> "On the 1st of May, 1828, Mr. William Walker began to send goods to Leigh. The circumstances under which he commenced business at Leigh show from what simple causes subsequent important events arise.

"At that time there was a gentleman named Westwell, who kept a shop in Westleigh, and who built a row of cottages near to the Church School, Westleigh. He frequently came to my grandfather's place of business, at Four Lane Ends, Atherton, and left money with my father requesting him to buy for him bandana silk handkerchiefs, and my father, looking round the silk warehouses in Manchester, called at the warehouse of Mr. Walker, which was then nearly at the top of Cannon-street. My father was informed that the firm were in want of weavers, and he suggested that the cotton weavers in the neighbourhood of Leigh could easily adapt themselves to the new material, and that as work at that time was scarce, owing to the depressed state of the cotton trade, Mr. Walker should try the experiment. Mr. Walker was pleased with the suggestion, and asked my father if he would look out for suitable premises for them and they would send some goods down.

"The original mill and shed now occupied by Messrs. Guest, at Stock Platt (recently demolished), were erected by the firm. The site was chosen by my father. The goods for which the firm were originally noted were bandanas; and after power-looms were introduced they made all kinds of silk goods, including figured dress goods and figured shawls made upon Jacquard looms."

Mr. Hope does not mention that the firm, which was usually called "Jacob's," first had a receiving house in "The Walk," King-street, before removing to their new mill. Mr. John Cree was the first agent of the firm. The following is a list of the other firms, who at various dates had receiving houses in Leigh, which the writer has obtained from weavers still living. These are all confirmed by Mr. Hope's account, and they are given in the order of the dates named by him:—

The block of premises in Lord-street, including the "Volunteer Inn" to Hope-street, consisted of a number of silk warehouses, or receiving places.

That of Thomas Lomas', commencing in 1830, afterwards became the firm of Clough, Meadows and Adshead; Mr. Jas. Pownall, of Pennington Hall, being his first local agent; Mr. Pownall was afterwards succeeded by Richard Mosscrop, generally known as "Philosopher."

George and James Smith, in 1833; agent, Mr. Simeon Dyson. Messrs. Le Mare, in 1839. Their present mill in Brewery-lane was commenced in 1858.

Messrs. Hoyle and Newbury commenced in 1831; their warehouse being in Newton-street.

Messrs. Hilton and Castre commenced in 1833; their local agent being Mr. James Cocker; the mill and warehouse in "Down Croft," now called Albion-street. The building is still standing, and is used by Messrs. Harrison, McGregor and Co.

This firm had a large mill, but employed principally weavers who wove their cuts in their own homes; they, however, kept a large staff of winders at the mill. A rather loud bell was rung at meal times, and the following verse is from a piece of doggerel which used to be sung to the ringing of the bell:—

> "Cocker's winders said one day
> Let us join at rum and tay,
> I'll buy rum if theigh'l buy tay;
> Well done Cocker's winders."

Cocker's Mill, as it was always called, was in after years taken over by Messrs. Le Mare, and worked in addition to their mill in Brewery-lane. Mr. Richard Jackson, one of the founders of the Leigh Co-operative Society, and who had for a long time been the warehouseman and overlooker at the Brewery-lane Mill, took over the management of "Cocker's" Mill, and resided in the house in the mill yard.

Mr. Pownall, who, as stated, was agent for Mr. Lomas in 1830, afterwards, in 1833, joined Mr. Bickham, and the firm Bickham and Pownall was established. They first occupied a small warehouse in Shade-lane (Duke-street) as a receiving house, and for handloom weaving; and afterwards built the shed for weaving

by steam power, which is now known as "Stanley Mill."

Messrs. John Barton and Co., known as "Old Barton's" was in the "Folley" (Union-street), and they also had a warehouse in the Market-place.

Barton had the reputation of having a violent temper, and one weaver tells the writer of an occasion when he (Barton) threw a weaver's cut through the window into the street.

Messrs. J. and J. Broadie's place was in a short street off Brewery-lane; they were succeeded in 1858 by Messrs. Le Mare.

Messrs. Harrop, Taylor and Pearson's place was in the building in Chapel-street now occupied by Mr. John Sims, for the agricultural implement business, and was known for many years as "Lancashire's Warehouse." Afterwards the mill at the bottom of High-street was erected for steam power weaving, and is now occupied for the silk business by Messrs. Courtauld and Co.

Winkworth and Proctor's commenced in 1834; the warehouse stood in Bradshawgate, at the corner of Albion-street (Down Croft), on the site now occupied by the Co-operative society's boot and shoe shop. This was afterwards converted into a grocer's shop, and was occupied by Mrs. Alice Smith, from whom the society purchased it in 1859.

On the opposite side of Bradshawgate, from Alice Smith's shop, was a field called "Skincotes Field." At this time (1834) there were no buildings on the north side of Bradshawgate, right from the "Folley," Union-street, to Brown-street. There was no Queen-street at this time; the main road turned to the right at the "Bird-i'th'-Hand" Inn, and again to the left about 100 yards further on, as at present. Queen-street was opened out across a field about 1851.

Peter Joynson and Co.'s warehouse was in "The Walk," the westerly side of King-street, and behind the premises now occupied by Mr. Geo. Stout; Mr. John Dickinson was the local agent, and business commenced in 1835.

Edmonds and Co.. of Macclesfield and London. commenced in 1837. Their warehouse was the premises at the foot of Leigh Bridge, which has since been used, first as a furniture broker's shop, next as a school by Mr. John Elliot, and at the present time as a model lodging house by Mr. T. Armstrong; Mr. Thomas Bryce was their local agent.

Ainsworth and Hilton commenced in the same year; afterwards Charles Hilton, in 1844. The place was known in his day as "Boggart's." The warehouse was in Brown-street, close to the "Bird-i'th'-Hand" Inn. In 1870 the present mill in Charles-street was built.

Summerskill's, or Milligan's (the local agent) is not mentioned by Mr. Hope. Their warehouse was at the corner of Etherstone-street adjoining the "Britannia" Inn. The premises were sold by auction by Mr. Rd. Greenough, in July, 1852, and were described as follows:—

"All those twenty-three excellent newly-erected and well-finished cottages, one shop, and a capital warehouse, well adapted and fitted up for a silk manufacturer, with every necessary and requisite convenience.

"It is situated in a pleasant and healthy part of the Township of Pennington, being at the entrance to Etherstone, and is commonly known by the name of 'Jones' Buildings.' For particulars apply to the auctioneer, or to Mr. James Milligan, on the premises."

Messrs. J. Broadbent and Son had a place in the "Cloth Hall" in Newton-street; and Messrs. Norbury and Bindloss in the yard of the George and Dragon Inn.

Messrs. Wm. Thorpe and Thomas Makin both had receiving places in Back Salford. Mr. Thorpe also kept the Fox Hotel and Mr. Makin the Black Horse Hotel.

The late Mr. Richard Daniels also had a small place in Robinson-street and Thos. Molyneux in King-street.

Mr. Hope also mentions the following firms, but the writer has not been able to find any living weavers

who remember them, viz. :—R. Longworth and Co., Thos. Pitt, Wm. Wanklyne, H. and E. Tootal, Joseph Moore, Bissett, Milsom and Clarke, Chorlton and Shatwell, and Brown and Son.

Mr. Hope states, however, that the majority of these firms did not stay long in Leigh.

In 1859, what was at that time considered to be a large mill, was erected at Welch Hill, for Messrs. Kemp and Stone; Mr. John Dean, who came to Leigh from Westhoughton, was their first manager.

At one time this firm employed, both inside the mill and at their own homes, about 1,800 weavers. They were succeeded by Messrs. Soper and Sons in 1866, and the mill, after being empty for a number of years, was taken over and considerably enlarged for the cotton weaving business by Messrs. Gamble and Smith in 1893.

Although, as stated, the work was introduced to Leigh at reduced prices, we are told that " it was soon observed that many hundreds of the inhabitants appeared to derive a good deal of benefit from its introduction, for in a very short time a material change, both as regards their personal appearance in dress and obtaining the necessaries of life, was visible to all the people in the neighbourhood."

For some time it appears that the masters or their agents behaved well to the weavers; the practice of " abating " being seldom resorted to.

As is always the case, when there is a kind of boom in any one trade, and the workers are doing well, there happens a rush of workers, who leave other trades. It is stated that those who had been employed previously " left their miserable trade (of cotton weaving) and exchanged it for that of silk, causing the silk labour market to be overstocked. The masters very soon took advantage of this and gradually commenced the wretched system of " abating," or making deductions from the wages earned, under all kinds of frivolous pretences."

It is stated that " after the lapse of four or five years, when it might be said that the art of silk weaving had

been pretty well established, a visible change in the conduct of some of the masters was manifest, for they seemed to have lost all that friendly feeling they had at first shown to the weavers."

The system of abating grew to such a scandalous extent that a committee was formed to collect evidence with a view to petitioning Parliament.

The late Mr. Thos. Hope states in the article previously mentioned that he had "the MSS. draft evidence and observations thereon," which was collected for the purpose of the petition, in his possession. This is certainly a very interesting document and worth preserving with great care.

The evidence obtained by the committee, and which was printed in pamphlet form, will no doubt be very interesting to present-day readers; and there are no doubt many people now living in the neighbourhood who will have some recollection of the circumstances recorded; and, as the origin of the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society, was to a very large extent due to a number of these same silk weavers, it will, perhaps, not be out of place to quote at some length from the evidence obtained by the committee of inquiry, as it gives a very vivid picture of the terrible sufferings of the silk weavers in those days.

It is no wonder that, when these poor weavers heard of the wondrous things being accomplished by the Co-operative Pioneers at Rochdale, they determined to imitate them.

At the time when this inquiry was made the number of persons engaged in weaving silk in Leigh and the adjacent villages was from 5,000 to 6,000, representing, say, about 24,000 persons dependent on the silk industry. Ten years prior to this it is stated that the number employed was about 10,000, or twice the number; and from what follows it is evident that owing to the starvation wages earned, and the unjust abatements, the weavers were drifting away to other employment.

From the committee's report it appears that the petition was presented to the House of Lords in 1844,

by the Right Hon. Lord Lilford, who gave notice to "move for a committee of inquiry." The motion was supported by Lord Kenyon, but was opposed by the Earl of Dalhousie, then the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, on the ground that a Commissioner was about to be appointed to inquire into the condition of the framework knitters, who apparently were in an equally bad way.

Nearly twelve months elapsed and the Session of 1845 was near at hand.

The Commissioner had not made his report, and all that had previously been done was almost lost sight of; consequently another petition was ordered to be prepared, founded upon the most recent cases of abatements. The petition was again sent up, and the committee state that—"The result of our extensive and laborious task is that at last we have induced the President of the Board of Trade to sanction the introduction of a Bill in the House of Lords, by Lord Lilford, founded upon the Commissioner's report, and such as they think will meet the peculiar case of the weavers."

There was a kind of Arbitration Act to which the weavers could appeal, but they durst not in many cases avail themselves of it; and when asked "Why don't you arbitrate?" their answer was "We should lose our work if we did, although our cases were ever so just."

There were, however, several attempts made to expose the cruel and unjust system.

The first attempt (September, 1842) at exposure is set forth as follows:—

> "The weavers, supported by the middle classes, appointed a person to register the amount of all abatements made by the masters. The Registrar was provided with a book for the purpose, but the agents of those masters, who were most notorious, for abating, waged war against it, fearing thereby to be exposed, and the amount of money they were daily pocketing made known,

they intimated to their respective weavers '*That if any persons in their respective employ should presume to register their abatements, they should not only lose their work, but also the rest of the family, if any, who were in their employment.*' "

In consequence of this autocratical mandate, scarcely any weavers ventured to register their abatements, and even the few that did were under great apprehension of losing their work.

One agent remarked to a weaver, whom he had abated 5s.—"*that if he presumed to register, he would not only stop his work, but that of his breed, seed, and generation.*"

It is stated that this plan of registering failed, and that "the avaricious and insatiable employers became more ravenous than before."

The report goes on to state that "at length the indignation of the clergy and the gentry in the neighbourhood became aroused. One who has invariably distinguished himself as a philanthropist and friend to the weavers, issued an address to the public, calling upon them, to come forward and assist in raising a fund for the purpose of remunerating any weavers who might lose their employment in consequence of appealing to the Arbitration Act."

The following are stated to be a few extracts from the address alluded to. After congratulating the weavers for not taking any part in the unfortunate disturbances which took place in various parts of the country (this, no doubt, referred to the struggle against similar tyranny and oppression in other places) just previous to the issuing of the address, and some further good advice, it says—

> "But meanwhile some steps should be taken for the present alleviation of your condition. You know that I am well acquainted with your circumstances, and that I am quite aware of the grievous, the heart-rending, and, as I believe, the fraudulent deductions, that you are forced

to submit to, under some of your employers. I cannot trust myself to speak of your sufferings on this head, in the terms which I feel to be due. Thank God! there are some honourable exceptions; but I know that you are repeatedly abated, and from very low wages too, on the most frivolous occasions; on the slightest ground, often on none, you are sent away with only half of the money for which you agreed to work. I know it to be tyrannical falsehood and fraud, from which so many thousands of you are at this moment suffering.

"Why do I say this? Because I know the full particulars of many cases. But it will be said, that I am no judge of the quality of the work, and truly, perhaps—but of this all the world can judge, that, if it were so badly performed, as to justify considerable abatements, it would not be to the advantage of the master to continue to employ you. But these masters abate you again and again with the one hand, and give you out work with the other; which is evidence that the work cannot be so badly done as they allege. And these masters are underselling the honest and fair trader in the market. These things are known to few but yourselves; I happen to be so situated, as to know a great deal about them. What is to be done? It is not the laws which are at fault. No, you owe all your sufferings to local circumstances. Against these evils there are legal provisions; but here lies your greatest hardship, you dare not have recourse to it.

"If a weaver appeal to the law for protection, by obtaining an arbitration summons, then, whatever the decision be, he can have no more work, either at that warehouse, or any other whose practices are similar. Moreover, any other weaver appointed by the magistrate, under 5, George IV., cap. 96, to be an arbitrator in any dispute, becomes, if he do not entirely succumb to the masters, equally a marked man. A weaver

dare not, if he have a family, be an arbitrator at all. For these evils the laws are not responsible. I do not mean that no improvements could be made in the law; on the contrary, I have made applications on this head in a high quarter. They were graciously received, but finding that, from the press of business, during the last session, sufficient attention could not be given to the subject, I now wait for a more favourable opportunity. You must remember that your circumstances are peculiar, your grievances are local, and not generally known. Elsewhere masters and men in your trade may agree so well, as not to require any interference, and, on complaining, we should probably be told, that there can be no legislation for particular places. At any rate some steps should be taken for your present protection. I know that, with the approbation, and assistance of the respectable masters, you have tried, by publishing lists of the abatements made by the different masters, to produce some good effect, but in this you have failed. There was still no motive as strong as avarice; exposure merely could not deter those masters from their unprincipled extortions which, it is well understood in the neighbourhood, produce them additionally several thousands a year.

"I have endeavoured to avoid severe language, but no milder terms than those which I make use of can with propriety be applied to the case. I cannot be supposed to bear ill-will towards the masters implicated, as I have no personal knowledge of any of them. Truth alone compels me to speak as I do."

After giving some further advice as to how to proceed and the method to adopt, he concludes by saying, "Take my advice, and as soon as you have succeeded in forming a respectable committee, I shall be glad, for my part, to give them a hundred pounds, for the furtherance of their object."

We are not told who this sympathetic and tender-hearted gentleman was, who wrote the address, and not only offered but actually gave the handsome donation of £100 to the fund, but there is good reason to think that it was H. C. Lacey, Esq., of Kenyon House.

We are told that the public responded to the appeal, and a public meeting of the clergymen, gentlemen, and tradesmen was held in Leigh, on the 14th September, 1842, when the following were present :—

Rev. J. Irvine, Vicar of Leigh, chairman.
Rev. J. W. Twist, Incumbent of Newchurch.
Rev. T. P. Kirkman, Incumbent of Croft.
Rev. J. Alsop, Incumbent of Westhoughton.
Rev. J. J. Dixon, Incumbent of Abram.
Rev. M. James, Curate of Bedford.
Rev. E. E. L. Blenkinsop, Curate of Leigh.
Thos. Jones, Esq., Etherston Hall.
J. Breame, Esq., Vicarage, Leigh.
T. Whitehead, Esq., Tyldesley.
R. Guest, Esq., Bedford.

Messrs. Thos. Prescott, Wm. Turner, J. Eckersley, W. Collier, J. Sargent, Sam Young, Wm. Mason, H. Calland, J. Green, Wm. Sargent, Richard Edge, Geo. Robinson, J. Hunt, P. Leather.

At a meeting of this committee, held on September 19th, 1842, resolutions were passed, embodying the points dealt with in the previous address, and appealing for funds ; and it was decided " that the resolutions be published in the London daily *Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, and *Courier* newspapers."

Several contributions, we are told, were promised to the fund—

"One gentleman promised	£100
The Rev. Vicar—annually	5
The Rev. Incumbent of Newchurch—annually	2
The Rev. Incumbent of Croft—annually	2
The Rev. Incumbent of Westhoughton—annually	1 "

Unfortunately, however, it is stated that "This attempt also failed, notwithstanding the influence of the clergy and gentry. It was soon discovered that the masters could, in a very short time, ruin the fund by the number of hands they could throw upon it."

The report contains a number of specific cases of extortion by the masters, giving the full particulars of each case, but omitting the names of the weavers, for obvious reasons.

One or two may be given as illustrations, and as typical of the rest.

One weaver informed the committee as follows:— "I took a cut to the warehouse that came to 37/-; the agent abated me 9/3 for having over much shute in. The next cut I did not put quite so much shute in, he then refused me 9/3 for being too thin."

Another states: "I wove a cut that came to £1. 14s. 8d. I was abated 7/- for its being 'too hard'; and another piece which came to the same money, I was abated 9/- for its being 'too soft.'"

Another: "I was *linked* with 15 other weavers, and we went to the Boar's Head public-house to get change. Two of the weavers said they had been abated 2d. per yard; others said 1½d., others said 1d. and so on. The weavers gave me their respective abatements and due wages. The aggregate of their wages was about £24 and out of that amount £7. 15s. 0d. were deducted for abatements."

Another very bad case is given of a woman weaver, which gives the full particulars of four cuts, which she wove in thirty weeks, and for which, at 3¾d. per yard, she should have received £6. 18s. 9d., she was abated £3. 0s. 1½d., leaving £3. 18s. 7½d. Out of this she had to pay 1½d. per 1s. for bobbin-winding and 3s. for twisting and gaiting, leaving a net earning for the thirty weeks of £2. 18s. 4½d., or 1s. 11¼d. per week for the poor woman to live upon.

One weaver, who evidently had his wits about him, states that "I wove for a firm in Leigh for several years, and I frequently took notice how many weavers got their due wages, before it became my turn to be

served. Upon one occasion there were 28 weavers before me—

5	weavers were abated	1d. per yard (from 8/- to 10/-)
3	,, ,,	1½d. ,, ,,
4	,, ,,	5/- each for 'time.'
1	,, abated	one-half her wages.
1	,, ,,	5d. per yard, at a cut that should have been 9½d. per yd.
7	,, were abated	2/- to 4/- each.
2	,, would not	tell me.
5	,, got their	wages.
28	weavers."	

It would appear from a list that there were at that time about fourteen different warehouses or receiving places for the weavers' work. The names, however, are not given, but only numbers, and the list shows the average abatement of each weaver at the fourteen places, which varies from 5s. 4d. to 4½d. per cut. The abatements at six out of the fourteen places were considered to be generally fair; and incidentally it is mentioned by several of the weavers that amongst the fair agencies were Mr. Pownall and Messrs. Harrop, Taylor and Pearson.

A frequent method of abating was that of fining the weaver for not finishing the cut in a stipulated time. Along with the warp the weaver received the shute, or weft, and it was a common practice for the agent to give a weaver a warp several days and even weeks before giving him or her the shute, without which they could not commence to weave. The writer can well remember his father complaining bitterly of having to wait for shute, and for having to go time after time to the warehouse for it.

A number of cases are given in the report illustrating this.

One weaver states: "I received a warp, and waited for the shute 26 days. I live 4½ miles from the warehouse. I had seventeen journeys before I got the shute. It is 9 miles from my house to the

warehouse and back, equal to 153 miles, the distance I had to travel, besides waiting on an average six hours each day before I got an answer. I generally left home in the forenoon after breakfast, and I never got anything to eat until I returned at night, and sometimes not till the next morning."

Another says: "I waited for shute twenty-nine days, and made twenty-one journeys to the warehouse. I live $5\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the warehouse, which is equal to walking 240 miles before I got the shute."

Another: "I waited 7 weeks before I got a warp; after receiving the warp I waited 3 weeks and 2 days for shute, and wove the cut in 3 weeks. I was to be paid 4d. per yard, but the agent abated me 2d. per yard.

111 yards at 2d. = 18s. 6d. for 13 weeks and 2 days, nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$d. per day to maintain wife and family."

The report goes on to state that: "From the latter end of September until the first week in January, hundreds of weavers may be seen lingering and shivering about the warehouses waiting for shute. Some of the warehouses have a kind of waiting-place for the weavers to shelter in, others have none, and they have to wait in the open air."

A very interesting list is given in the report showing the number of days weavers had to wait for shute; also the number of journeys to the warehouse and the miles they had to travel. The total distance varies from 36 to 165 miles. The places where they came from are set out, and are as follows:—Croft School, Wigshaw Culcheth, Newchurch, Twist Green, Bury-lane, Black Moor, Astley, Tyldesley, Chowbent, Chequerbent, New Rock, Westhoughton Chapel, Chew Moor, Wingates, Dobs Brow, Castle Hill, Boggart House, Swan, Hindley, Lowton Chapel, Golbourne Smithies, Lane Head, Lowton Common.

A list is given showing the earnings of "50 good and steady weavers" for twelve months, for the year 1844, and shows an average of 7s. $11\frac{3}{4}$d. per week, and after paying about 25 per cent for bobbin-winding and other incidental expenses, leaves their net earnings at less than 6s. per week.

The prices paid in 1834 were about 20 per cent higher than this, giving an average of 7s. 2½d. per week.

Other interesting tables and cases are given in the report, but enough has been extracted to show the terrible conditions under which the silk weavers, who were the backbone of Leigh sixty or seventy years ago, had to exist, and gives a very vivid picture of the industrial life of the town in those days.

It must not be considered that the silk weavers tamely submitted to the tyranny of the employers, or to put it more correctly, of the local silk agents; for the evidence is too clear that in many cases the principals in Manchester were not aware of the extent of the impositions which were practised on the poor weavers by their agents; although the position of the weavers was little less than that of slavery, and they had no other method of earning the very bare means of existence than by weaving, and to get the ill-will of the agent meant starvation, yet there are many cases recorded where the weavers stood up for their rights and fought for them in the County Court.

In the early numbers of the *Leigh Chronicle* there are numerous reports of cases, tried before Judge J. Stock Turner Green, where weavers sued the employers for serious abatements from their earnings. Some of the cases are exceedingly interesting, and give a vivid picture of the helpless condition of the weavers. Stern and severe as Judge Green was generally considered to be, in many of the weavers' cases which came before him he showed his sympathy with them, and at times severely rebuked the local agent or employer, in cases of glaring inhumanity, although the law might be on the side of the employer.

As has been previously stated, each weaver on receiving a cut from the agent, had to sign a paper, a copy of which was given to him. On this paper was set forth the particulars as to length, &c., of the cut, the rate per yard to be paid, and the length of time allowed for weaving. The signing of this paper constituted a legal and binding contract, and on the slightest variation from the terms of the contract serious penalties could be inflicted.

The following is an illustration, being a case reported in the *Leigh Chronicle* of May, 1853 :—

"At Leigh Petty Sessions Jno. Turton of Lowton, was committed to goal for one month. It appears he had gone to Messrs. Walker's, silk manufacturers, who gave him some work to do, presumably a cut to weave. Turton received the work and signed a contract, and then took the work from the putting-out room into the waiting-room, and left it there. In a few hours he returned and stated he had got another job, and would not finish the work he had taken from Messrs. Walker."

Fancy being sent to gaol for a month for simply declining to take home a cut to weave. The master in a case like this could not possibly have suffered any damage, as the cut never left his warehouse. Such a case as this is not possible in these days, and proves conclusively how tyrannical the employer could be, and the unfortunate position of the poor silk weaver.

In another case reported in the same newspaper in 1859, a weaver sued Jas. Cocker, the agent for Messrs. Hilton and Castre, for 18s. 8d., being the amount deducted from the wages for weaving a cut, because the cut was not finished in the stipulated time. The woman had been ill for a month, but had not sent word of her illness *in writing*, which the law required. It was stated in the evidence that Cocker had seen the woman and her child ill in bed, and yet he took advantage of the fact that notice had not been sent *in writing*, and got a verdict in favour of his robbing the weaver of 18s. 8d. because she had not finished the work in time.

As confirmation of the statement that the injustices inflicted on the weavers were very often due to the local agent, several weavers living to-day state that oftentimes weavers would take their finished cuts all the way to Manchester or Patricroft, some going by the "fast packet" on the Bridgewater Canal, which made daily journeys between Leigh and Manchester, and others would even walk all the way and carry their

cuts on their shoulders, and by this means get them direct to the owners' principal warehouse, where they would get paid at once, and were very seldom *bated*.

One cannot avoid coming to the conclusion that the local agents were pecuniarily interested in the deductions made from the wages of the weavers.

From 1858 onwards there are many interesting reports of public meetings of weavers, generally held in the Market-place, and sometimes in the Town Hall, to protest against various acts of injustice on the part of the masters ; or appealing for advances of wages, or against proposed reductions.

Many of the speeches delivered at these meetings, considering the opportunities for education in those days, were really very eloquent, and sometimes very pathetic.

Up to 1859 the weavers had, to a very large extent, been fighting their battles against their employers single-handed, and hence could make very little impression.

Some fifteen years before this time a kind of weavers' union or committee was formed, but it did not accomplish much, and died out owing to a want of unity amongst the members.

On August 6th, 1859, however, a public meeting was called for the purpose of forming a " Protective Society."

The meeting was held in the Town Hall, and the chairman was Mr. Wm. Dickinson, who nine years later became manager of the Leigh Co-operative Society, and continued as such for twenty-one years. Mr. Dickinson made a very lengthy speech, setting forth the advantages of organisation. He said " the basis of the proposed union or association was very simple and concise, requiring that those who joined it should pay to its funds one penny per quarter. That money was appropriated in defending weavers against unjust abatements, and in looking after the general interests of the trade in the shape of obtaining advances of wages or preventing reductions."

Certainly a very comprehensive programme to be worked on a contribution of a penny a quarter.

Mr. Dickinson, in his remarks, showed a great amount

of tact and diplomacy, being careful to say nothing that would alienate those of the employers who had the reputation of dealing fairly with their weavers, and he concluded his speech with the following eloquent remarks :—" Whilst a weaver was young, he was able to do any kind of work, but old age would creep on apace, and when his powers of competition were diminished, then, if not before, he would be glad of the shield of sympathy and protection, which this association would extend to him. He believed it would be a permanent institution, that it would not die out either rapidly or suddenly, but that as it advanced in years it would progress in usefulness, until it commanded the support of all the trade, and extended its advantages to all who otherwise would be defenceless. Those advantages—thanks to the press—would not be kept secret, for the proceedings at the meetings of the silk weavers were published to the world in the *Leigh Chronicle*; and he must say to the reporter for that paper, the trade generally was deeply indebted."

Anyone reading the speeches made by these old silk weavers at their meetings, would see at once from what had sprung the strong radical element, which the town has always been noted for. How could it be otherwise, with a generation of workers who had been ground down under the heel of tyranny and extortion, little less than barefaced robbery of their hard-earned wages, and whose daily lives consisted of one round of work from very early morning to very late at night ; and whose average earnings, on which to bring up their families, did not amount to more than from 8s. to 10s. a week, and whose food consisted mostly of " Jannock " and oatmeal porridge and water, with occasionally white bread on Sundays ?

The children were put to work at a very early age, oftentimes having to stand on boxes or stools so as to reach the work.

John Yates, of Mather-lane, who died about two years ago, stated that he commenced weaving at eight years of age, and before he had ceased wearing skirts. Thos. Rothwell, who is still living in Mather-lane,

commenced at nine years of age, and had to stand on a pile of turf, and oftentimes in bare feet, and in later life has frequently walked to Patricroft and Manchester, carrying his silk cut with him to the warehouse. Rothwell was at one time a famous foot racer, and has taken part in many a match.

Mr. Robert Bleakley, whose son Robert was at one time secretary to the Leigh Liberal Club, was a typical Radical, and at the latter part of his time was the town crier, and at this same weavers' meeting made a lengthy and interesting speech, which he commenced as follows:—

"This Protective Society reminded him of some words that were very sacred, which said something about 'lengthening your cords and strengthening your stakes.' Now, they had very often been told that they had no stake in the country. They had been taunted with that expression, very often from a certain party. He contended, however that the working man, had a stake, and a very great stake too. Undoubtedly, that stake was his labour. If he had a few cottages, or a little land, to strengthen that stake, it was all the better, but many of them were so unfortunately fixed that they had no stake, but their labour, and he looked upon the society now formed as a means of strengthening the only stake they had."

Other interesting speeches were made at the meeting by Mr. T. Stones and Mr. Birchall, and the following were selected as a committee:—Robt. Bleakley, Bold Hilton, Jas. Hindley, Peter Kearsley, Jas. Ranicar, John Smith, John Taylor and John Tyldesley.

After the formation of the Protective Society numerous meetings were held, the reports of which are very interesting reading. Every speaker seems to have been reported *verbatim*; and as they were in the habit of making the meetings the occasions of airing all their troubles and grievances, they form the best possible means of realising the conditions which prevailed, and under which the weavers had to struggle for their existence.

That they were not without courage is shown by the fearless way in which they criticised the various employers against whom they had grievances. Witness the following:—Mr. Joseph Gregory, in giving his report of an interview a deputation had with one of the master's local agents, said: "He (the agent) was telling a complete falsehood. He did not know what could be done with such masters but something must be done. They had one master even worse than S——. He did not know whether the weavers were allowing him to die a natural death, and were leaving him, but if that was the case, it would be a good job (laughter). If weavers would continue to take work from such masters they were very foolish."

Mr. Thos. Stones, in his report, said that "After speaking plainly to the agent they intimated to him, that perhaps they might have to see his master, when he replied 'but you will not talk to my master in this manner; he will not be talked to in this manner by working men.' He (Mr. Stones) said 'it came to this then; he was not to be talked to by the men who helped to keep him. The men who kept him must not speak to the man who was kept.' A voice: 'We're a different race of beings.' Mr. Wm. Collier said 'the best way would be to give over keeping him.'"

The meetings of the weavers, however, were not always for the purpose of bewailing their destitute condition, and complaining of their employers' injustices, or discussing ways and means of contesting some of the most glaring cases of imposition. They had their times of rejoicing, and any slight concession by their employers was hailed with loud expressions of gratitude; which of itself was a proof of the hardness of their lot. They were indeed thankful for very small mercies.

Occasionally we find reports of tea parties, and it is more particularly at these meetings that we get a real insight into the condition and the feeling of the weavers in connection with their work.

One of these tea parties, or "Silk Weavers' Soirée," as it was called, was held in the Mechanics' Institution,

Newton-street, on January 28th, 1860, and it is worth while quoting at length the remarks of some of the speakers.

Mr. Robt. Bleakley, who appears at this time to have been a very prominent leader of the weavers, was again appointed chairman, and in the course of his remarks he said: "I recollect some 14 or 15 years ago, when a first effort of the kind was made, a great mass of information was collected, as to the unjust abatements at that time practised, by different masters and agents in Leigh. That movement proved so far successful that a pamphlet was published (this refers to the pamphlet from which extensive quotations have been made earlier on in this record) and something like £80 spent through the aid which the weavers received at that period from the gentry as well as other inhabitants of the neighbourhood. When that pamphlet was printed, many members of the House of Commons were furnished with a copy, and a Bill was introduced into the House for the purpose of redressing those grievances, which the weavers had then to complain of. I am sorry to say however, the introduction of that Bill, had not the desired effect. After that another movement was set on foot for the establishment of Boards of Trade; but that was partially a failure; and then from time to time there were in succession several other agitations for the purpose of getting up and establishing a list of prices. At last however it became the turn of the silk weavers of the present day to bestir themselves in the matter and they have succeeded in getting up a satisfactory and fair list of prices. The masters had long had their Protective Society and had offered £5 reward, as well as employed a solicitor, in order to punish, parties who stole a few bobbins, or a few hanks. Now he wished he might live to see the Silk Weavers' Protective Society so successful that they might be in a position to offer a £5 reward

for every silk agent or master, who practised unjust abatements. (Loud applause.) He was reminded that about 2 months ago when some of them waited upon certain manufacturers, one of them raised his hand in an attitude of denunciation and said 'I do not like these unions.' (Laughter.) It was evident that the employers did not like the weavers joining together to protect their little interests, and yet they availed themselves of the privilege of conducting one of their own. Had not the weaver as much right to protect his little as the master had to protect his much."

Stirring speeches were also delivered by Mr. Thos. Stones, Mr. Jos. Gregory, Mr. Wm. Birchall, Mr. S. Unsworth and Mr. Thomas Yates.

Mr. Unsworth spoke of children being put to work at seven years of age, instead of going to school until they were something like thirteen. His views were clearly much in advance of the times.

Mr. Thos. Yates' speech was particularly interesting for the reminiscences it contained. He said: "He thought the weavers of this country should not rest satisfied until every man could get £1 a week to support his family. However with the wages they had already got through the exertions of the committee, were not their children better fed and better clothed than they would have been, had the committee acted in a lukewarm spirit? The grocers, drapers, and tailors also felt the benefit. With reference to this tea meeting, he could easily imagine, that some persons would sneer at it. A weavers' tea meeting! Why, they would sooner have said a weavers' porridge meeting (loud laughter). One would have thought, in that way, they might have made a better *stir* of it. He could imagine some of these jealous worthies saying, the next thing would be a chimney-sweepers' tea meeting (laughter). Why not? They ought to have one if they wanted

one. When a boy he learnt a lesson in that very room (the class-room of the Mechanics' Institution) which he had never forgotten. The *Church School* was then kept there, and the lesson he had been there taught was to learn 'to live and labour truly to get his own living in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call him;' and if he only did so, whether he were a chimney-sweeper, or a weaver, or a master manufacturer, if he did his duty, he had a right to be respected as a man (hear, hear). He knew he would be pardoned for what he was about to state, because it was a fact—it was a fact that weavers had been less thought of than anyone else. He had mentioned chimney-sweepers, and he would, tell an anecdote of one. Not a hundred miles from Trafalgar-street, Bedford, there lived a chimney-sweeper who had a son, who one day happened to do something wrong; and the sweep said to his son, 'I tell thee what, Bill, if thou does not behave better I will bind thee apprentice to that abominable trade called weaving.' (Loud laughter.) He never saw this anecdote in print, but he believed it to be a fact. He remembered when a boy a printed card was fixed upon his loom; he began to weave when eight or nine years old, and he remembered that on that card were the words 'United we stand, divided we fall.' Aye, there was a weavers' committee in those days, and a weavers' union, but they divided and they fell."

Mr. Yates was for a long time a popular local preacher of the Wesleyan Methodists body.

At a meeting held in March, 1860, a new committee was elected, and it may be interesting to record their names. They were the following:—Thos. Yates (president), Jos. Gregory (vice-president), Joshua Cleworth (treasurer), Thos. Isherwood, Jno. Tyldesley, Thos. Stones, Thos. Dickinson, Thos. Downes, Peter Kearsley, Jno. Smith (Westleigh), Jos. Brobbin, Thos. Ratcliffe,

Thos. Livesley, Jno. Darwell (Westleigh Mill), and James Hilton (Dick Mather's-lane). For the office of secretary Mr. T. Ratcliffe and Mr. Jos. Gregory were both nominated. On a show of hands, Mr. Gregory was elected.

The Treaty with France, made by Cobden, was supposed to have seriously damaged the silk trade of this country, and the weavers were very much divided in opinion concerning it. Several large meetings were held in the Leigh Market-place in the summer of 1860, and the speeches delivered were both very lengthy and very interesting.

The principal speakers in opposition to the Treaty were Mr. Gerard Ward, a silk weaver of Bedford, and Mr. Joseph Duckers, of Lowton, who is sarcastically described by the editor as "a shopkeeper, temperance advocate, minister of the gospel, hurdy-gurdy player, amateur bellman, horn blower, biscuit baker, pony driver, flying stationer, and a man of all work." These two were considered to be the Tory champions, Mr. Gerard Ward making a vehement attack on Free Trade.

The principal speakers on the other side, who argued that the French Treaty had nothing to do with the then existing slackness in the silk trade, were Mr. Hamlet Norris and Mr. Jethro Hampson, both of whom made very telling speeches; Jethro seemed to have been a great favourite with the weavers, and roused them to a great pitch of enthusiasm, with his plain, blunt arguments and native wit. Several well-known Radicals like Robt. Bleakley seemed to be in doubt, and afraid of expressing themselves.

Jethro strongly urged the weavers to get out of the silk trade and seek other work, as it was "nothing but a butterfly business."

This advice was acted upon wherever possible.

Mr. Matthew Dickinson, of Lowton, a silk weaver, and a frequent speaker at the meetings, said at a meeting about two years later, that—

> "It was not likely the weavers would bring up their children to the silk trade, when they knew

they were so badly paid. It would be far better if they sent them to a cotton factory, where they would receive, when about 9 years of age, something like 2/9 per week, and when at the age of 13 their wages would average 9/- or 10/- per week. There were piecers in a cotton mill at that age receiving about 10s. a week, which was more than many of the able-bodied silk weavers could attain. When they got to be about 18 or 19 they might be fortunate enough to meet with a pair of wheels, and then their wages would be over 20/- a week. A cotton weaver might go in a factory, and in about 2 or 3 days he would be an accomplished hand; but not so the silk weaver. It took a long period for a man to become perfect as a silk weaver. It was more than six years since they ceased teaching the trade (silk). He had a boy who was as good a weaver as himself, but he had put him to the factory at his own request, and that lad was now earning 8/- a week. When asked why he preferred the factory to the silk trade, he said he had two reasons—first he knew when his work was done; and secondly, that when he became a man, he should be able to earn more money. Weavers might seek agricultural employment and they would then get something like 14/- or 15/- a week."

Thus we see that the silk trade, which was introduced into the district about thirty years previously, owing very largely to the depressed state of the cotton trade, was now in its turn being again superseded by the improved cotton trade.

The Protection Society soon made its influence felt. There are reports of frequent deputations being sent to the masters, and of the funds being used for assisting weavers to fight the masters in the County Court. In one of these cases, the report of which occupies nearly a whole page of the *Leigh Chronicle*, Mr. Mayhew, of Wigan, was the solicitor for the weaver, and Mr. Cobbett, of Manchester, represented the master.

The magistrates on the bench were Rd. Guest, Ralph Fletcher, Jas. Bailey, and O. Burton. Their decision was against the weaver. An appeal was made, and the case was carried to the Queen's Bench, which upheld the magistrates' decision.

On one occasion a monster procession, with banners, was got up, and the effigies of two of the agents of the masters, who had been most obnoxious for their "abating" practices and general ill-treatment of the weavers, were carried in the procession, and were shot through with pistols or guns as they were passing along the streets. One of the effigies had on each side of it two figures representing pigs, but to what the pigs alluded is not very clear. One old weaver still living says they were called the "Trade Union Pigs." The effigies were afterwards thrown into a ditch near to the "New Road" (now Queen-street).

It was a very striking characteristic of the weavers that they bore all their troubles and sufferings with the utmost patience, and it was almost unknown for them to resort to begging, however hard their lot.

A very interesting book has recently come into the possession of the writer, which is none other than the first wages book of the firm of Bickham and Pownall, showing what appears to be the commencement of their business in Leigh, confirming the date named by Mr. Hope, and gives particulars of all wages paid during three years, 1833 to 1836. The first entry in the book is a payment on December 31st, 1833, to John Ratcliffe for "setting up mills (warping mills), 9s. 6d."; then follows on the same date, "Richard Birchall — pullies, 16s. 10d." Birchall appears to have been engaged as a kind of foreman or manager, for he receives the fixed wages of 16s. per week for the first twelve months, when he gets an advance to 18s., then 20s., and finally 25s. This was a princely wage in the silk trade in those days. In the following week are entered the wages of three warpers, and their respective earnings, viz., John Youd, 8s. 9½d.; Edward Mills, 6s. 11½d.; Henry Green, 11s. 2½d.; and an item of 12s. 0½d. for coal and candles.

About six months later the number of warpers had increased to eight, and finally ten. Their average earnings during the period of three years is about 9s. per week.

There appears to have been only one female warper during the whole of the three years, her name being Alice Birchall, and her earnings, as a rule, are about two-thirds of that of the men.

The first weaver to bring in a cut was William Westwell, for which he was paid 71 yards at 4½d., 26s. 7½d., and no abatement. Then follows, in the same week, cuts from James Hindley, James Collier, and Ralph Hayes.

Jas. Collier was the father of Wm. Collier, J.P., superintendent of Wesleyan Insurance Co., and a member of the Board of Guardians.

Hindley and Hayes seem to have been abated 10s. and 3s. 6d. respectively.

The number of weavers gradually increases, and the book gives the names, the lengths and prices of the cuts woven, and the amounts of the abatements of about 500 of the old Leigh silk weavers.

Amongst many interesting entries in Messrs. Pownall's wages book are payments for candlesticks and candles, and later on, lamps and oil, there being no gas supply in those days. Oil for "Ingan," 6d.; this item appears frequently. Repairing "Ingan," 6d.; clipping horse, 25s. (present-day price is about 5s.; no doubt the work can be done much quicker with modern appliances). Each week there is an entry for "Turnpike," 3s.; also items of 4s. 6d. for "horsling," presumably, looking after the horse. The "horsler" or "ostler" was first Wm. Jameson, and afterwards Charles Houghton.

Poor rates for warehouse, 12s. 6d.; and highway rate, 15s.; but the rate per £ of assessment is not given.

Taxes for horse and gig, £2. 18. 10½d.; for bread and cheese and ale, for removing, 11s. 4d.; but the most interesting of all the entries is the following:—"Gift to woman with 3 twins, £1," but unfortunately no name is given.

The following entries are interesting as showing the

names of persons in business in Leigh over seventy-three years ago :—

John Fairclough, for oats and bran ; Thos. Green, hay and corn ; John Ridyard and Thos. Starkie, for saddlery ; Henry Miller, horse-shoeing ; Peter Wright, timber ; Jno. Scowcroft, coals ; Lord Redford, painting warehouse. It must not be understood that Redford was a member of the Upper House. Reeds were supplied by Ralph Wright, Geo. Hargraves, and Thos. Howarth. Healds mostly by Thos. Smith, generally known at the time as " Old Smack." Smith's heald works were on the site which is now occupied by the society's central drapery shop, in Bradshawgate, and was burnt to the ground about 1846.

The items appearing in the book for abatements from the weavers' wages are comparatively few, which bears out the statement previously made that Messrs. Pownall's were considered one of the few fair employers.

The weavers were always very ready to recognise the fairness and goodwill shown to them by any of their employers or their agents. Mention has been made previously that Messrs. Bickham and Pownall's was one of the firms which treated their employés fairly and honourably. Mr. Pownall, who was a Justice of the Peace, resided at Pennington Hall, and was an exceedingly popular man in Leigh, always ready to assist in any public work for the benefit of the people at large. He was a very tender-hearted man, and a great favourite with the silk weavers. It is told to the writer, by an eye-witness, that on one occasion when he was on his way to the mill, and he learned that there had been a dispute and saw the weavers in the street, that he burst into tears. The weavers were, however, soon at work again.

Mr. Richard Birchall, after having been manager of Messrs. Pownall's for twenty-five years, and being, as has been previously stated, one of the first two to receive wages when Messrs. Pownall's commenced in 1833, was presented by the workpeople with a handsome testimonial, consisting of a gold watch and chain, a portrait of himself in oil, in token of the very high esteem in which he was held.

Mention has been made of the power the weavers possessed in any case of dispute with the masters, when abatements were being resorted to, of having the matter submitted to arbitration. The method was for the weaver, or more often a representative who had more courage, and who was not so much afraid of reprisals by the masters and the local agent, to attend before a magistrate, whose decision was final. In the early days of the silk weaving there were very few magistrates available. Squire Withington, as he was always called, the father of the present genial and popular squire, and who resided at Culcheth Hall, was at one time the only magistrate living near Leigh who was accessible to the weavers. He was exceedingly popular with the weavers because he was always ready to help them whenever possible. On one occasion, when he was acting as arbitrator, he told the agent that he could find no fault with the cut. The only reply the agent could make was that "It would not fetch the price in the market." Mr. Withington there and then bought the piece at the full price; and in another case he told the agent that he "Could not find a spoilt piece in Manchester."

The silk agents got tired of the "Squire," and generally fought shy of him, for as one of the old weavers, who is still living, said to the writer in earnest tones, "The squire was a gentleman, and he was too honest for them."

A very similar report is given of Mr. Henry Charles Lacey, Esq., J.P., who resided at Kenyon House (generally called Kenyon Hall), who, on one occasion, stated that he had been to both London and Manchester and could not find a damaged silk cut. Mr. Lacey was a great friend of the weavers. The anonymous donor of £100 to the relief fund, previously referred to, was in all probability Mr. Lacey.

A good story is told of one weaver, who in later life was a very successful business man, and prominent in the early history of the Leigh Co-operative Society, and who saw a good deal of the world outside his native country. At this time he had come into Leigh from

another district, and was not well acquainted with the characteristics of the silk masters. He went to an employer and asked if he could have a silk warp. The man of silk required to know first if he had brought any character with him. "No," said the weaver, "I've no written character, but I daresay I could get one." "Very well," was the reply, "come again in a day or two, and bring the character with you." Our weaver was always a very shrewd and careful man, and on making some inquiries about the employer who wanted his character, he found that the said employer had an unenviable reputation for "bating" the weavers. He called again at the mill a few days later, and on being asked if he had got the character, replied: "No, but I have got your character, and I have decided not to take any work from you."

An old weaver, still living, tells a story about a weaver named James Battersby, who was known by the nickname of "Blue Jem." Blue Jem wove a cut for an agent named Barton, whose receiving place was in Union-street, known then as "The Folley." When the cut was finished and taken in, Mr. Barton said he would "'bate' him twopence per yard"; stating that "strange shute" had been used and making other complaints.

Blue Jem, who was a big powerful man, swore he would not be bated; he got through the receiving window, laid hold of Barton and threatened to put him through the window. One of Barton's assistants tried to pull him back, when he said he would put them both through. He got paid in full, with the exception of 4s. which was kept until he fetched his "gears," meaning the healds and reeds.

Another story is told of an old politician and silk weaver, Sam Higson, who was a very well-known character in his day. Happening at one time to have in his possession a pig; and times being extremely bad, he called his family together telling them he had a problem to propound, which was, whether they should eat the pig or the pig should eat them, for he could no longer keep it; they decided, however, to eat the pig.

Sam, unfortunately, had the habit of getting into the hands of the police constables oftener than was good for him. On one occasion, however, he turned the tables on his tormentors. He happened to see a constable, whose name was Metcalf, and who had frequently had dealings with Sam, going into the Crown Hotel vaults. After waiting outside for a while, Sam follows him, and finds Metcalf unmistakably drunk. He hauls him out of the vault and drags him to the police station, calling out in a loud voice as he went, " I've caught my calf."

The writer can vouch for the accuracy of this story, as he was an eye-witness.

The constable was soon afterwards sent away from Leigh.

Sam was also a poet, and could rhyme on any subject at a moment's notice.

Although he was a comparatively illiterate working man, some of his serious compositions are worth preserving ; and being the work of an old silk weaver and warper, well-known to Leigh people in his day, one or two selections shall be given, as they have never before appeared in print.

The longest of his poems is called " The Outcast," and is really a description of his own experiences.

Gettin Owd.

I'm gettin' owd, I feel I am.
My age—I'm just turned eighty-one,
I'm tellin't truth, it is no sham ;
I feel I'st verra soon be gone.

I've shootin' pains i' every limb ;
My earin's gooin' rayther dull.
My day-leets, too, are gettin' dim ;
My cup o' life is nearly full.

My teeth are gone, an' laft my jaw.
They'n gone an' flit—e'en one by one.
Their startin' off by nature's law ;
Time whispers, " Lad, tha'll soon be gone."

My yure's comin' off my yed;
What there's laft, its aw gone gray.
Age comes wi' pain; my health is fled;
I feel I've welly spent my day.

My face is like a withered tree;
There's lines just like a skoo-lad's map.
Times furrows you may plainly see;
I'st soon be havin' my last nap.

Age cramps the limb an' dims the ee;
Life's gone sometimes, wi' sudden shock.
May peace be mine before I dee;
Wi' me its gettin' twelve o'clock.

An' then I cast life's cares aside,
An' whisper low "I monnot stay."
Friends aw come clingin' to my side,
An' watch the scene in life's last play.

Then death comes, with his icy chill:
My pulses stop; they shut my een.
An' in a little aw is still,
Save one short sigh, where grief is keen.

An' then they don me in a shrowd;
They box me up; I'm ta'en away.
Folk say at last—his toes are cowd,
He's paid that debt we aw mon pay.

The Robin.

Mi sweet little Robin, come sing,
On th' hedge, or on stump, or on tree.
Aw like to look at thee, wee thing,
Aw awlus was fond o' thee.

Hast lost thi own mate up o'th' moor?
No shelter this cowd winter's day?
Tha'rt welcome when tha comes, thar't sure,
Awst never dreave Robin away.

A patriot, noble and brave,
New feather'd and donn'd in his best,
A true brid—no coward nor slave—
He wears freedom's gem on his breast.

O Robin, thi sweet mellow song
Brings feelin's aw connot explain;
Like thee, aw was merry when young,
Age comes, and it neaw makes me tame.

Tha should come to mi window at times,
Awst feed thee; neaw let us be chums;
Come and sing for me sometimes,
And I'll gi' thee a handful o' crumbs.

If it's winter, i'th' snow or cowd frost,
Come to th' dor, or somewheer abeawt,
Aw'll see as tha shannot be lost,
And aw'll throw thee some nice bits oreawt.

Eaw pratty he looks i' mi ee,
He looks just as preawd as a king;
Aw see, thee at tip top o'th' tree;
What like mi brid Robin con sing.

Thi song is so mellow and free,
Aw've heard thee when singin' thi best;
Poor Robin, theaw'll very soon dee,
And sleep where aw good Robins rest.

Thi singin' has made mi heart leet;
Time's short, Bob—life winnot last long;
Theaw's sung very sweetly to-neet,
Theaw'll soon sing thi last mellow song.

On this stage death knocks us aw flat,
And Robins mun flit i'their turns,
And theaw may be food for a cat,
And awst soon be sleepin' with worms.

There are still a few of the old handloom silk weavers, or *poverty knockers*, as they used to be called, living in the district. A few are still working in their own homes at Lowton, just as was done seventy or eighty

years ago, and they can occasionally be seen as of old "bringing whom" their finished cuts to the receiving place. The writer was told of a case which occurred quite recently, where a Lowton weaver arrived at the agents, and said "I am bringing whom, but I've lost my cut." It seems the weaver had had a lift on the road in a friend's conveyance, and placed the cut down; and in conversation had not noticed it slip off into the street. It was, however, picked up by a passing vehicle and carried to Atherton, and eventually returned to the owner.

Several weavers can also be seen at work on the old handloom, at the works of Mr. Geo. Hilton, near Leigh Bridge; and it deserves to be better known that one can purchase here the real handiwork of the old silk weavers, for which Mr. Hilton has been honoured with orders from Royalty. Here can also be seen the old "winding-on" frame, consisting of a large drum about 2ft. 6in. diameter, which is used for winding the warp from the coil on to the weaver's beam.

The old bobbin-winding wheel, or "Twelve Apostles" as it used to be called, is still in use for winding the shute or weft on to small bobbins which fit into the shuttle.

The silk weaving trade was always of a very varying and unstable character; changing from "brisk" to "slack" in a very short time. Indeed it was as old Jethro Hampson said, a "butterfly" business.

One or two extracts from the *Leigh Chronicle* will show the state of the trade just before the commencement of the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society.

In March, 1855, the Editor says: "We regret to state that the staple trade of this neighbourhood (the manufacture of silk) still continues in a very unsatisfactory state. Many hundreds of operatives are unemployed altogether, and still greater numbers are only partially employed. Messrs. Walker's silk mill has been running 3 days a week during the last month."

Whilst, during a portion of 1856, we are told the trade was "unusually prosperous."

Again, in 1857, the year in which the co-operative society was started, it is stated that "Business transactions have been almost brought to a stand; and perhaps at no former period has there been so great an amount of distress amongst the operatives in the silk trade. It is confined to no particular district, but has extended in a greater or less degree, to every district where the silk trade exists."

On October 10th, 1857, the following leading article appeared in the *Leigh Chronicle*:—

"Great Distress in the Silk Trade.

"We regret to state that the silk trade continues in a most depressed condition. As a consequence of the inactivity of the staple manufacture of the district, a large portion of the population are unemployed, and many are in a state of semi-starvation. Weavers, in many instances, have been entirely without work, for two or three months; and those who have secured half-employment, have been looked upon as highly favoured, and fortunate people.

"One man states that he has had little to do since April last, except 'walk the streets.' He adds: 'Mine is not the worst case, there are hundreds of cases worse than mine. I never knew this place in the same state as it is now, and it is my opinion that there are nine-tenths of the weavers playing them.'

"Many startling cases of distress have come to our knowledge, and we have received information of one family in Bedford, who have made dinner of boiled potatoe pareings, given by more fortunate neighbours. We have reason to fear, that this is by no means an isolated case.

"This abject misery has been little heard of, in public; it has been borne with almost uncomplaining patience and fortitude.

"We trust, however, that our readers will arouse themselves, to the public necessity of aiding these suffering neighbours. The gloom and pitiless

cold of winter are advancing, and will add much to the bitterness of their woes. We trust, therefore, that speedy measures will be adopted to alleviate the existing distress. It must not be said, that we fold our arms in apathy, whilst our operatives, willing to work, but unable to obtain it, starve around us."

This powerful appeal of the editor, Mr. Thos. Halliwell, who was always a good friend to the weavers, soon had its effect. In about a fortnight later a public meeting was held in the Town Hall. The appeal for subscriptions, which was published in the *Chronicle* of October 31st, is worth quoting in full, giving as it does the names of many of the leading townsmen of that time, and gives a practical proof of their sympathy and the interest they took in the welfare of the working classes.

With this appeal, and the list of subscriptions to the fund, this brief account of our old silk weavers, the originators of our society, will conclude.

"Local Distress.

"At a public meeting held at the Town Hall, Leigh, on Tuesday evening, October 27th, 1857, to take into consideration, the best means to be adopted to secure the alleviation of the distress existing in the neighbourhood—Richard Marsh, Esq., in the chair.—the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:—

"(1) Moved by the Rev. John Middlehurst; seconded by Mr. Isaac Standing—

> 'That this meeting deeply regrets, the existence of wide-spread distress in this district, arising from the depression of the silk trade, and hereby resolves that a subscription list shall be at once opened, for the purpose of rendering aid in provisions to the suffering operatives.'

"(2) Proposed by William Charles Jones, Esq.; seconded by Charles Anderton, Esq.—

> 'That the Rev. J. Middlehurst, Mr. Halliwell, and Mr. J. Standing be appointed a deputation to

request the Board of Guardians to meet liberally the applications for relief.'

"(3) Moved by Mr. Thomas Halliwell; seconded by Mr. Thomas Wallington—

'That the following gentlemen form a committee for the management and administration of the relief fund, with power to add to their number; the clergy, magistrates, and medical gentlemen to be members (*ex-officio*):—Messrs. W. B. Williams, J. Standing, G. E. Gee, T. T. Hayes, W. Turner, W. Towler, T. Danby, W. Rigby, J. Battersby, and J. Cleworth.'

The names of Mr. W. Johnson, as honorary secretary, and Mr. Halliwell, as treasurer, were added.

"(4) Moved by Wm. Charles Jones, Esq.; seconded by Mr. Thos. Halliwell—

'That the best thanks of this meeting be and are hereby given to Richard Marsh, Esq., for the able manner he has presided over this meeting.'"

The following is the list of subscriptions as published in the *Chronicle*:—

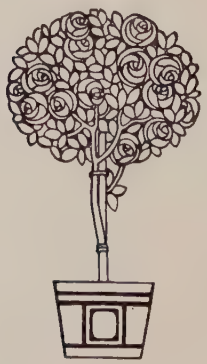
	£	s.	d.
"Messrs. J. T. and T. Walker.....	25	0	0
,, Bickham, Pownall and Son.	20	0	0
,, Peter Joynson and Co.....	20	0	0
William Charles Jones, Esq.....	20	0	0
Daniel Gaskell, Esq., Lupsett Hall .	10	0	0
Right Hon. Lord Lilford.....	10	0	0
T. E. Withington, Esq.	10	0	0
J. S. Turner Green, Esq., Myddleton Hall	10	0	0
Richard Marsh, Esq.....	5	0	0
Thos. Lancashire, Esq.....	5	0	0
Robert Guest, Esq.....	5	0	0
Mr. Joseph Chadwick.....	5	0	0
Messrs. Barton, Westleigh.....	5	0	0
Right Hon. the Earl of Ellesmere...	5	0	0

	£	s.	d.
Messrs. Clough and Meadows.....	5	0	0
Richd. Dewhurst, Esq., Kenyon House, per J. Pownall, Esq.....	5	0	0
Miss Leigh, The Limes, Hale.....	5	0	0
Rev. Sir H. R. Dukinfield, Bart.....	5	0	0
Ralph Fletcher, Esq. Laburnham House	4	4	0
Rev. J. Middlehurst	3	1	0
Richard Guest, Esq.....	3	0	0
Thos. Morris, Esq., Wigan	3	0	0
Thos. Gerrard, Esq., Adlington-grove	2	2	0
Messrs. Farnworth Bros.	2	0	0
,, Holden and Andrews	2	0	0
Mr. Wallington	2	0	0
Workpeople of Robt. Guest, Bedford Brewery	2	0	0
Rev. M. James	1	1	0
Mr. G. E. Jee	1	1	0
,, W. Rigby.....	1	1	0
,, T. Halliwell...	1	1	0
,, J. Standing..	1	1	0
,, T. Danby	1	1	0
Charles Anderton, Esq.	1	1	0
Mr. Richd. Greenough	1	1	0
,, Wm. Johnson (Ironfounder) ..	1	1	0
,, James Pendlebury..	1	1	0
,, T. T. Hayes	1	1	0
,, Isaac Taylor	1	1	0
,, William Thorp	1	1	0
,, John Fairclough	1	1	0
Arnold Johnson, Esq.....	1	1	0
Saml. Newton, Esq.....	1	1	0
Mr. Joseph Hunt	1	0	0
,, George Standing	1	0	0
,, John Barlow	1	0	0
Loyal Order of Druids, No. 10 Lodge, Leigh Unity	1	0	0
Mr. Wm. Towler.....	0	10	6
,, Wm. Charleson	0	10	6

	£	s.	d.
Mr. Jas. Battersby	0	10	0
,, W. B. Williams.....	0	10	0
,, W. B. Fletcher	0	10	0
,, James Cocker	0	10	0
,, Thomas Deane	0	10	0
,, Henry Fletcher	0	10	0
,, John Battersby	0	10	0
,, Baines	0	10	0
,, John Collier	0	10	0
Ralph and Jane Howcroft	0	10	0
Mr. John Isherwood	0	10	0 ”

These, with other subscriptions below ten shillings, made a total of £232.

“This mournful truth is everywhere confessed,
Slow rises worth by poverty depressed.”



Mr. Thos. Cooper. Mr. Richard Birchall. Mr. Richard Hindley.
Mr. Robt. Leather. Mr. Richard Foulds. Mr. Wm. Hill.

Mr. Jas. Leigh. Mr. Chas. Donnelly. Mr. Peter Ward.

GROUP OF PIONEERS.

Mr. Robt. Wainwright. Mr. William Ridyard. Mr. Richard Jackson.

Mr. Adam Smith. Mr. Enoch Holt.

Mr. John Longton. Mr. Thos. Dickinson. Mr. Wm. Dickinson.

GROUP OF PIONEERS.

HISTORY OF THE LEIGH FRIENDLY CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED.

CHAPTER I.

1857.

STORY OF THE FORMATION.

THE MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT CLASS; THE GARRET IN SUGAR-STREET; AMATEUR SHOPKEEPERS; THE FIRST BALANCE SHEET.

"Large streams from little fountains flow;
Tall oaks from little acorns grow."

IT was in such circumstances and under such unfavourable conditions as are portrayed in the introductory chapters that co-operation was first started in Leigh.

It is an old and true saying that "necessity is the mother of invention," and oftentimes when one is in the last extremity of despair a helping hand is held out, or a sudden inspiration points to a way out of the difficulty.

It will be readily admitted that so far as the workers in the silk trade were concerned, and they were the great bulk of the inhabitants in this district, at that time, they were indeed in the direst distress.

It has often been argued by the interested opponents of co-operation that the members are simply deluded by the dividend system, and that they could spend their money to better advantage with private tradesmen.

It cannot be denied that the great mass of co-operators throughout the country consists of the better class working people; meaning by this, those who manage by their skill, industry and thrift to keep themselves above the level of what has been described as the "submerged tenth." The better class working people are therefore, in the main, the careful and thrifty; and the argument of the private tradesmen, as stated above, amounts to saying that these millions of thrifty and careful people, have not sufficient sense and judgment to decide for themselves where and when they get the best value for their money, and that they, the *dis-interested* private tradesmen, are the ones best able to advise them as to how they ought to spend their money.

There can be no question that the conditions under which these silk weavers lived were such as to make it absolutely necessary that they should weigh and measure with the utmost care the value they got for their hard-earned wages.

If co-operation had been built simply on what has been described as the "fetich" and the "delusion" of the dividend system, without any real and substantial benefit being derived, it would very soon have been found out, and could not possibly have stood the test of over sixty years by the shrewd and practical men of the North of England, and have been embraced as it is to-day by nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions of members and doing a business of nearly 100 millions per annum.

The men who initiated the movement in Leigh were certainly not misguided dreamers, or likely to be easily "deluded." They were a small body of intelligent working men, who had formed a kind of mutual improvement class, and had been meeting together for several years in a garret over a newspaper shop at the corner of Sugar-street and Newton-street, which was then

kept by Mr. James Cook, and has recently been demolished for street improvements and market extensions. Sugar-street is the narrow street running across the front of the new Town Hall.

This mutual improvement class, which was in no way connected with the Mechanics' Institution which was held in the building on the other side of Newton-street, consisted of the following members, viz. :— William Dickinson, George Dickinson, Charles Dickinson, Thomas Dickinson, Joseph Gregory, John Hamblett, Enoch Holt, Robert Leather, John Longton, Robert Wainwright, George Wilkinson, Joseph Lawton Lea, Michael Peter Daly, and one or two others.

Ten out of the thirteen named were connected with the silk industry. Longton was a fishmonger, and Wilkinson a shoemaker.

This mutual improvement class had been holding meetings for about two years, discussing all kinds of subjects, and occasionally having the luxury of a newspaper, the *Northern Star*, which was edited by Feargus O'Connor, the Chartists' leader ; this was read by one of the party, and current questions discussed, before the question of co-operation attracted their attention. About this time a trust or syndicate had been formed by the principal grocers and provision dealers in the town. It is told by people still living that these same shopkeepers used to meet weekly, and decide on the prices to be charged for the principal articles of food ; one old silk weaver told the writer that " they charged extravagant prices for the poorest of stuff."

Something like a trust existed also in the boot and shoe trade, for in the *Leigh Chronicle* for February 14th, 1857, an advertisement appears from " The master shoemakers of Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley," giving a list of prices at which they had agreed to sell all kind of boots.

Hearing of the wonderful things which had been accomplished by the co-operators at Rochdale, whose society had then been in existence for thirteen years, and had 1,850 members, £15,142 of capital, and was doing

a business of £79,789 per year. Our local pioneers determined to imitate them.

Several meetings were held to discuss the matter, and a committee was formed and a secretary and treasurer appointed *pro tem.*

The secretary was Mr. Richard Birchall, junior, and the treasurer Mr. Jas. Leigh, better known as "Jimmy Love."

Copies of rules and other information were obtained from the Rochdale Society, and, after careful consideration, it was eventually decided to commence paying subscriptions of sixpence per week. Nine persons at once gave in their names as members on June 28th, 1857. These being—Enoch Holt, Richard Jackson, Robert Wainwright, Thos. Dickinson, Wm. Dickinson, John Longton, Geo. Wilkinson, Wm. Ridyard, being joined a fortnight later by Adam Smith. Meetings were held weekly for the receipt of contributions and for admitting new members. During the first month the subscriptions of these nine members amounted to 15s. In the second month seven others joined, and the subscriptions then amounted to £2. 2s. 1d., which was considered very satisfactory; and it was agreed that if the society continued to increase at the same ratio, that in about two years' time they might prudently enter into business. However this postponement of action did not meet with the approbation of one or two who were more impatient than the rest. These were rash enough to propose that a beginning should be made at once, with the funds in hand, and they ultimately prevailed on the committee to speculate in tea and coffee to the amount of 37s., which was all the capital in hand, after having purchased a pair of second-hand scales and a few weights.

This tea and coffee was obtained from the stores of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society, and was divided out amongst the members at cost price. The next speculation was the purchase of a sack of flour, which was disposed of in a similar manner.

Holyoake tells how the Rochdale Pioneers were

scoffed at when they first opened their store. One shopkeeper boasting that he could come with a wheelbarrow and wheel the whole stock away; and one can well imagine that the tradesmen of Leigh would have many a good laugh over the doings of the pioneers of co-operation in Leigh, and would try to kill their enthusiasm by ridicule. These, however, were not the stamp of men to be daunted by laughter or ridicule.

The commencement at Leigh was in a very similar manner to that at Rochdale. The Rochdale workingmen, however, commenced their business on the ground floor of an old warehouse, with 28 members and £28 capital; whilst at Leigh our pioneers commenced in the garret where they had held their mutual improvement class, with only 16 members and £2. 2s. 1d. capital.

The approach to the garret was through an entry in Newton-street to an open yard, and up a long flight of open steps on the outside of the building. In this way the members could get up to the garret without going through Mr. Cook's house.

The serving out of the goods was taken in turn by the members.

The selling of goods, however, at cost price was not what the committee had in contemplation. There was no accumulation of profit—no augmentation of the society's capital—and, what was of far greater importance, no method of inducing the poorer classes of working men to save a little money in an easy way, except by disposing of the goods at a reasonable profit, and placing the profit to the credit of the member in proportion to the amount of his purchases of the society's goods. But this could not be done to advantage until the society had more capital.

The subscriptions of sixpence per week continued for the first four months until the end of October. After this date, the members evidently having got more confidence, larger subscriptions began to be paid in, and on November 17th Richard Hindley, a silk weaver, boldly ventured to deposit £5, which he

followed up with another deposit of the same amount three weeks later.

As if not to be outdone, John Longton immediately follows with two deposits of £20 each within one month. A princely sum indeed for a working man to entrust to his fellow working men in an unregistered concern, and with no other security than the confidence he placed in his comrades.

Other deposits of £5 immediately followed by Richard Foulds, John Prescott, John Lee, Richard Battersby, sen., Jas. Leigh, Thos. Unsworth, and Ann Richardson, who was the first female member of the society.

This rapid accession of capital roused the committee into action. They commenced to fit up their store and to stock it with a moderate supply of groceries and provisions, and arranged to be open for business at 7 o'clock in the evening for three nights in the week. This arrangement was continued to the end of the year, when stock was taken and the accounts balanced, and a balance sheet laid before the members showing that the number of members on the books had increased to 78, and the capital to £119. The receipts for goods sold were £106. The profits realised £10. 8s. 7d. The members' purchases amounted to £94, and as all those who had taken an active part in the business had rendered their services gratuitously, the committee was enabled to declare a dividend of 2s. in the £ on the purchases of the members, and the balance of £1. os. 7d. was appropriated to a fund for depreciation.

The fact of setting aside a sum for depreciation at the very commencement of the business was a good augury, and a proof of the common sense and business acumen possessed by these amateur shopkeepers.

The following is a copy of the first balance sheet, which is written on a quarto sheet of blue paper, and appears to be in the handwriting of Richard Birchall, jun., the secretary, *pro tem* :—

"Balance sheet for the Quarter ending December 31st, 1857, of the Leigh Co-operative Society—

" Stock in the Store.....	£62	1	7
Store Fixtures	14	16	11½
Cash on hand	53	3	3
	130	1	9½
Contributions	119	6	4
	10	15	5½
Intrist for the subscription money		6	10½
	10	8	7
Subscribers at 2/2½ in the pound for purchase money	10	7	7
		1	0"

As stated above, the actual dividend paid was 2s. in the £.

This was considered a very satisfactory report, and at once gave the members courage to go forward.

The garret in Newton-street, open on three nights a week, was soon found to be too confined, and too inconvenient to deal with the business in a satisfactory manner. It was therefore determined to look out for more suitable premises.

It would certainly have been an interesting sight to see those whose turn it was to serve in the shop dragging up the garret stairs a tub of butter or a large box of soap; and also to see the members coming back down the steps with their baskets and bundles of provisions. The sight was also interesting, in a different way, to the private tradesmen, for we are told that they had spies in various places to take note of what the co-operators were doing; and as the bulk of the working people were in those days under the heel of the private tradesmen, owing to the credit system, it was no light risk that they ran in going to the co-operative stores.

FIRST SHOP
(In the Garret, corner of Sugar Street and Newton Street).

CHAPTER II.

1858.

Registration of Rules; Organisation; Consolidation; The Garret Becomes Too Small; Two Grocery Shops Opened; Bread Baking and Clog and Shoe Business Commenced; Reading-room Established; No Credit Business Allowed.

"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

NOT only did the result of the first quarter's working stimulate the members, but it at the same time caused the laughing and jeering private tradesmen to prick up their ears, and scent danger ahead. Considerable difficulty was experienced in securing a shop, owing to this opposition of the tradesmen; but at last one was secured in Bradshawgate, which had been previously occupied by a Mr. Glover, and is now No. 97—the rent of which was £16 per annum.

Our pioneers were determined not to let their light shine under a bushel, for with success came greater courage, and they determined to make a bold bid for general public support.

In the *Leigh Chronicle* for December 19th and 26th, 1857, appears the first public announcement of the society's existence, in the following terms:—

"CO-OPERATION, CO-OPERATION, CO-OPERATION.

"Working men look to yourselves.

"The public are respectfully informed, that a co-operative store is now open, in the large room over J. Cook's and T. Hindley's, at 7 o'clock p.m. every day except Saturday, when it is open at 4 o'clock p.m., for the retail sale of provisions.

"Entrance from the entry opposite to the Mechanics' Institution, Newton-square. Persons desirous of becoming members may leave a deposit of 6d. with the persons serving in the room, on any night; the same will be laid before the committee at their next meeting.

"This society has advantages never before equalled in this locality. No person will be allowed to take up less than five or more than one hundred shares, at £1 each; payable at 2d. per week or 2s. 2d. per quarter. Shares can be paid in advance. Interest is paid on all paid-up shares, at the rate of five per cent per annum. Profits will be divided according to their purchases at the store; so that the more goods a member purchases, the more profit he will get.

"Come forward then, and be members of the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society.

"N.B.—The rules will be ready for the members on New Year's Day, when a general meeting will take place, at two o'clock in the afternoon for the appointment of trustees, treasurer, and other officers."

The general meeting, however, was held on January 20th.

In fixing January 1st, the committee had evidently not made allowances for the red tape proceedings in connection with obtaining the registration of the rules.

On January 18th, 1858, the society's rules were enrolled under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, 1852, and from this time the society dates its legal existence.

At this date there were ninety-eight members, and their total subscriptions amounted to £221. 10s. 4d.

The following is the list of members' names, and is given in the order of the date at which they commenced to pay subscriptions:—

1 Enoch Holt.
2 Richard Jackson.
3 Robert Wainwright.
4 Thomas Dickinson.
5 William Dickinson.
6 John Longton.
7 George Wilkinson.
8 William Ridyard.
9 Adam Smith.
10 Richard Yates.
11 James Savage.
12 James Prescott
13 Arnold Hampson.
14 Richard Foulds.
15 Richard Battersby.
16 Richard Collier.
17 William Prescott.
18 John Crank
19 Robert Leather
20 Richard Flitcroft.
21 Joseph Hampson.
22 Giles Yates.
23 Richard Jackson.
24 James Ramsdale.
25 John Collier.
26 Thomas Thornley.
27 Joshua Cleworth.
28 John Hilton.
29 James Hilton.
30 Thomas Green.
31 John Unsworth.
32 Richard Hindley.
33 William Hill.
34 Charles Donnelly, jun.
35 James Hampson.
36 John Prescott.
37 James Cook.
38 Thomas Woodward.
39 James Pasquill.
40 James Smith.
41 Charles Donnelly, sen.
42 Henry Boardman.
43 John Birchall.
44 John Leather.
45 John Leigh.
46 Peter Kerfoot.
47 Richard Mills.
48 Robert Howarth.
49 Clement Melbourne.
50 James O'Neil.
51 Peter Leigh.
52 Bold Hilton.
53 Richard Battersby, jun.
54 Richard Battersby, sen.
55 James Leigh.
56 Richard Ball.
57 Thomas Unsworth.
58 Thomas Harrison.
59 William Jameson.
60 John H. Bowden.
61 Samuel Hart.
62 Joseph Naylor.
63 Ann Richardson.
64 Joshua Williams.
65 James Leigh.
66 Joseph Green.
67 John Parr.
68 William Cubban
69 John Cunliffe.
70 William Cunliffe.
71 Samuel Horrocks.
72 John Ranicar.
73 John Leigh.
74 Richard Birchall.
75 Patrick Kinsley
76 William Kirkman.
77 Peter Leather.
78 John Schofield.
79 James Baxter.
80 Thomas Pendlebury.
81 Thomas Cooper.
82 Elijah Molineux.
83 Jane Asylum.
84 Robert Smith.
85 William Greenhalgh.
86 James Isherwood.
87 James Brooks.
88 Thomas Smith.
89 Jane Pomfrett.
90 John Eckersley.
91 John Lingard.
92 Alan Hodson.
93 James Hampson.
94 Thomas Starkie.
95 Samuel Bowden.
96 William Shuttleworth.
97 John Hindley.
98 Edward Yates.

During the first six months before the registration

of the society, viz., from June to December 31st, 1857, the only written record of the society's transactions is the book showing the weekly subscriptions of the members, and the first balance sheet already referred to. Commencing on January 1st, 1858, proper books of account are kept, and an almost complete record of the society's business is preserved right on to the present day.

The first recorded minutes of a committee meeting are on January 4th, 1858. The first general meeting of the members was held on January 20th, 1858, and the first resolution was—"That the proceedings of this meeting shall be published in the *Leigh Chronicle*."

The following officials were appointed :—

Enoch Holt, *President.* James Leigh, *Treasurer.*

Richard Birchall, junr., *Secretary.*

Trustees.

William Hill, John Longton, William Dickinson.

Auditors.

William Hill, Richard Hindley.

Committee.

Richard Foulds, George Wilkinson, Clemont Melbourne, James Smith, Bold Hilton,

William Green, Mr. Jackson, G. Borthwick, John Ratcliffe, Mr. Irvine (Vicar of Leigh) were appointed arbitrators. Adam Smith was to be manager "as long as the committee shall think fit."

The treasurer was to give bond for £200, and William Hill was to "keep the same in his care."

The certified rules were to be kept in the care of the secretary.

Mr. Clemont Melbourne was instructed to "purchase a nest of drawers, that is on sale at Bolton for 12 shillings."

And Richard Hindley, Richard Foulds, Robert Leather, Richard Flitcroft, and John Wilkinson were

"to serve in the shop for the present week ending January 27th, 1858."

Such is a complete record of the business transacted at the society's first general meeting of members.

The following is the report of this first general meeting of the members as it appears in the *Leigh Chronicle* of January 21st, 1858, and which had to be paid for as an advertisement; future reports, however, were not charged for :—

"Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society.

"The first general meeting of the above society was held at their place of business in Bradshawgate, on Wednesday evening last, when in pursuance of the new rules, which are enrolled under Act of Parliament, the treasurer, trustees, auditors and arbitrators were duly appointed, and arrangements made for giving security to the society in the transaction of its business. The meeting was numerously attended and owing to the unanimous feeling which seemed to animate the members, a considerable amount of business was transacted."

It is worth noting that the society's rules were drawn up, and all correspondence in connection with obtaining the registration of same, was done by William Hill, who received for the work the not extravagant fee of 10s.

Some of the minutes of the committee meetings are very quaint and amusing.

The following is an exact copy of the first minutes recorded :—

"Monday evening, January 4th, 1858.

"The committee this evening as desided to have bought, the following articles—

"Resolved 1st. 12 dozen of candles.
,, 2d. 2 cwt. of 5½d. sugar and 1 cwt. of 6d.
,, 3d. 2 cwt. of common treacle and 2 cwt. of patent.
,, 4. 3 firkins of butter.
,, 5. 1 sack of meal.
,, 6. To sell soap ¼d. per lb. less then selling price by taking 28lb. together;

also by taking 3lbs. together must be bated ½d. from the 3lbs. Also resolved that Adam Smith, and George Wilkinson to have 6s. each for going to Rochdale, besides expenses. Also resolved that Joshua Williams, and Richd. Battersby, senr., must serve in the shop for the next 3 week."

On January 25th, 1858, the committee passed the resolution—"That anyone speaking shall stand on his feet." A clear indication that they intended to conduct their business in an orderly manner. At the same meeting the manager was given authority to "purchase anything that will be profitable to the society, until the next meeting;" and further, "that whole pigs is to be purchased and salted on the premises."

Amongst the earliest of the payments for goods was the sum of £25. 12s. 6d. to John Battersby, now Alderman Battersby, and was for 3 cwt. of sugar at 56s., and four firkins of butter at 102s. The price of the sugar is more than three times the present-day price. Reuben Crompton, ironmonger, Market-street, supplies "one shuffle" for 2s. John Ranicar receives 4s. for "siden the shop, bakehouse and seller, and goin to Warrington." Thomas Halliwell for printing five hundred copies of rules, £4. 5s. Richard Collier "for different jobs," 4s. Allen Mansley's invoice for "1 best letting down rope 25/10" contains a very quaint picture of a rope walk, showing four large wheels, and four men each with tall hats, each holding the rope in their hands! Occasional entries for "liquor" refer to the article used in bread baking, and not to intoxicating drink. The prices paid for some of the articles of food were not at this time greatly in excess of present-day prices. Potatoes, however, cost about 13s. per load, and tea, with duty of 1s. 5d., ranged from 3s. to 4s. per lb. These were the wholesale prices; no record is kept of the prices charged to members. Coals from James Diggle's cost 3¾d. per cwt. and the account for the Pennington poor-rate is at the rate of 1s. in the £.

In the same month in which the rules were registered.

January, 1858, the shop in Bradshawgate, previously mentioned, was opened for business during every night in the week at 7 o'clock, and on Saturdays at 4 o'clock, and was described as No. 1 shop. The serving out of the goods, both here and at Newton-street, was still done by the members of the committee, two being appointed each week for each place, and for which they received the not extravagant wages of twopence per hour.

The shop in Bradshawgate, being more convenient, it began to be more used by the members, and on March 1st, 1858, the following resolution was passed :—"That the Newton Square store only to be open three nights per week and the paper to be taken only three nights per week."

A newspaper called the *Northern Star* was taken, and was for the use of the members when coming to the store.

Another resolution was—"That the shopmen be ordered to weigh tea, coffee and tobacco *without* the paper."

There was also a resolution that—"The minutes to be signed by the president." Notwithstanding this instruction, the first time they were signed was August, 1863, or five years later.

It was soon found, however, that the opening of the shops in the evening only was not sufficient to cope with the rapidly-increasing business, and two months later, March, 1858, the shop in Bradshawgate was opened throughout the day. A permanent shopman was engaged, Mr. James Dale having the honour of receiving the first appointment, at the wages of 26s. per week.

In February, 1858, bread baking was commenced behind the shop in Bradshawgate, Mr. John Morris being the first baker, at 18s. per week.

In the following June a rather surprising change was made. James Dale, who had been shopman for three months at 26s. per week, was appointed baker at the same wages, and John Morris who had been baker, was now appointed shopman at his same wages of 18s. ;

but more surprising still, at the very next meeting appears the following resolution :—"That James Dale and John Morris be discharged this evening." And again, at the next meeting, John Morris was re-engaged as baker and shopman combined, with the assistance of Lucien Prescott as baker.

At the beginning of April the society commenced in a small way the clogging and shoemaking business in one of the cottages on the opposite side of the road from the grocery shop, near to what is called the "Broad Entry." On May 17th, 1858, John Longton was deputed to "purchase eight pairs of boots at Manchester." It is not likely that he went specially to Manchester to make this small purchase. Longton was a fishmonger, and would very likely be going to Manchester on his own business. Mr. Charles Donnelly claims to have made the first pair of boots for the society. On June 24th the business was removed across the road to a shop owned by Mr. Joseph Limon, at the rental of £18 per annum, and continued to be occupied by the society until the erection of the new central building. Mr. George Wilkinson was appointed the first manager or foreman (as he was described) of this department, and he was at once sent to Manchester to purchase a stock of boots, shoes, &c., his first purchase amounting to £30. Edward Yates was instructed to "make a big clogg," and this clog was fixed as a signboard in front of the shop, and remained for a long number of years. Speaking of the shoemaking business—in the *Leigh Chronicle* for October 23rd, 1858, the following curious advertisement appears by a prominent private tradesman :—"To journeymen shoemakers—Wanted three women's men, and one stout man's man, apply to M. F. Leigh."

This, of course, is well understood by those in the trade.

In June of the same year an additional grocery store was opened in a shop a little higher up Bradshawgate (towards the east), owned by Mrs. Bowden, and previously occupied by Mr. Kerrison, at the rent of £20 per annum. Mr. Christopher Greatrix was engaged

MR. ADAM SMITH
(General Manager, 1858 to 1868).

MR. WILLIAM HILL
(Secretary, 1858 to 1881).

to manage this shop, and it is interesting to note that Mrs. Greatrix was shortly engaged as assistant, being the first of the only three cases in the society's history where a female has been engaged in a grocery shop. She continued to be employed in the shop for two years.

It has been stated to the writer that a kind of co-operative store had been held for a short time in a shop at the corner of Bold-street, the site on which is now erected a gentlemen's club ; and that the store belonged to the Druids' Friendly Society and was confined to their own members ; no definite confirmation has, however, been found for the statement.

On May 20th, 1858, the following resolution appears on the minute book :—" That W. Hill be authorised to superintend the accounts throughout and direct the manner of keeping them." His salary was at the rate of £3 per quarter.

This is the only official notification of the appointment of Mr. Hill as secretary, and there does not appear to have been any confirmation of the appointment at a quarterly meeting of members until January, 1863, when he was appointed to devote the whole of his time to the work at the salary of 26s. per week.

For the first year, Mr. Robert Leather acted as assistant secretary. Although Adam Smith was appointed manager at the first general meeting, held in January, it was not until the following July that he commenced to be a permanent paid official ; the resolution stating—" That Adam Smith be engaged at the rate of one hour per night to look after the necessary business of the shops," but it is not stated what his salary was to be.

The first actual dividend declared after the registration of the society was for the quarter ending March 27th, 1858, and was at the rate of 1s. 3d. in the £ ; the other four dividends for the year being 1s., 1s. 3d. and 1s. 4d.

At the quarterly meeting held on October 25th, the following important resolutions were passed :—

" 1st. That a reading-room be established in connection with the society.

"2nd. That one per cent of the nett profits may be applied towards the establishment of a reading-room, for the use of members of the society; which shall be formed and conducted under such regulations as the committee of management may from time to time direct.

"3rd. That a sub-committee of seven members shall be appointed at each quarterly meeting, whose duty shall be to attend to the opening, lighting and closing of the reading-room, and to see that the regulations of the committee are carried out. Their services shall be rendered gratuitously."

This was undoubtedly one of the most important and striking events in the history of the society; and yet one not to be wondered at, seeing that the moving spirits in the society were young men who had for some years previously been meeting together as a mutual improvement class, and would, if their discussions could have been reported, in all probability have been looked upon as advanced Socialists in their day.

In July it was decided—"That a microscope be bought for the use of the society." This was not for the purpose of examining the goods, but could be considered as another of the educational influences, and was for a long number of years lent out to the members in connection with the reading-room, at a small charge.

Another interesting resolution was—"That W. Dickinson and G. Wilkinson be deputed to wait on Mr. Irvine (Vicar of Leigh) and solicit the use of the National School for a tea party," but there does not appear any record as to whether they were successful or not.

The following are some of the papers and magazines which were supplied to the reading-room at this time:—*Leigh Chronicle*, *The Co-operator*, *Morning Star*, *Cassell's Family Paper*, *Gallery of Nature*, *Spectator*, *Alliance News*, Dr. Beard's *Self-Help*.

At the end of the year 1858 the committee's report congratulated the members "on the rapid and successful extension of the operations of the society during the year."

At the commencement of the year the number of members was 78, with a capital of £119, and at the close of the year the number was 280, with a capital of nearly £1,300.

The amount received for goods sold during the year was £6,387. 4s. 8d., and of this amount £487. 9s. 6d. was for the clog and shoe department; £30. 13s. 2d. was allowed for interest on paid-up shares; and £269. 5s. was paid in dividend.

The report goes on to say that, "although the progress of the society has been so rapid and successful, the committee of management have had many difficulties to contend with. They have had to meet with dictation on one hand, and misrepresentation on the other; but having resolved to pursue an honourable and straightforward course, in the discharge of their duties, to the best of their ability, and being supported, by the good sense of the members, those difficulties have been easily overcome, and in laying this report before them, they take the opportunity of assuring them that they feel proud of the position which the society has attained.

"As the business of the society continues to increase, the committee feel the want of more commodious premises, and they hope the members will take the propriety of providing buildings of their own into serious consideration."

It is interesting to note the concluding statement, that "no debts are contracted, all the business of the society being transacted with ready money."

The reference to "misrepresentation" referred to the fact that the private tradesmen, who had in the first instance ridiculed the efforts of these working men pioneers, had now realised the fact that a serious rival was in the field, and that the power they had for so long exercised of charging exhorbitant prices for their goods was now completely broken down, and they thereupon commenced to use the weapon of misrepresentation, and which still continues to be their principal weapon to the present day.

The following report of the first annual meeting appeared in the *Leigh Chronicle* on January 15th, 1859:—

"Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society.

"On Monday evening, the 4th inst., the annual meeting of the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society was held in the large room, Newton-square, which was well attended by the members. Mr. Holt, the President, presided, and after referring to the progress of the society, the balance sheet for the quarter was read to the meeting.

"The various items of the expenditure relating to its management being laid before the meeting in detail, were unanimously confirmed. The receipts for goods during the quarter amounted to £2,158. The amount received from members for contributions was £201, and the amount withdrawn £84. During the quarter 52 new members have joined the society and the number now reaches 280. The balance in hand was £110 and the profits this quarter has been £147. Profits to members at the rate of 1s. 4d. in the £ on their purchases, £114, leaving a balance of £13; a portion of which will be devoted to the establishment of a reading-room. The society contracts no debts, but does all its business for ready money. It possesses a capital of nearly £1,300 and carries on business in three departments, namely, provisions, grocery, and clog and shoe departments, and has shares in the Rochdale Co-op. Corn Mill. The members were highly gratified with the progress of the society, during the first year of its existence. The report and balance sheet were unanimously adopted.

"The meeting then proceeded to the appointment of officers for the ensuing year, and at the conclusion of the business, the members retired deeply impressed with the value of self-help."

GROCERY SHOP (Bradshawgate and Albion Street).

BUTCHER'S SHOP, Albion Street
(Showing door leading to Reading-room.)

CHAPTER III.

1859.

FULL REPORT OF A MEMBERS' MEETING; BRANCH SHOPS OPENED AT ASTLEY AND LOWTON; LOWTON COMMON SOCIETY; NEW SHOP, CORNER OF ALBION-STREET; DRAPERY BUSINESS COMMENCED; METALLIC CHECKS USED; GREAT PROGRESS.

> "We must take the current when it serves,
> or lose our ventures."

FOR the first eighteen months of the society's existence, a record was kept in the shops of the purchases made by the members, for the purpose of ascertaining the amount on which dividend had to be allowed. At the beginning of 1859 the system of using metallic checks was commenced; and the first purchase made was 10,000 labels, as they were called, representing one penny each, and 5,000 at threepence and sixpence. Later on checks of other values up to £1 were used. This system of using metallic checks was continued for thirty years. It was never satisfactory and was open to great abuse.

James Leigh, who was the first treasurer, ceased to occupy that position in November, 1858. Some disagreement took place between the committee and himself. It is stated that Leigh desired to get his son engaged as head shopman in the grocery, and the committee considered him too young for the position. This, unfortunately, resulted in Leigh not only giving

up his position of treasurer and discontinuing his support of the society, but it is stated that he took active opposition to it, and on one occasion he purchased a large consignment of soap and hawked it about amongst the members at cost price.

Mr. Jno. Eckersley was elected treasurer in his place on January 31st, 1859.

In April, 1859, the committee took the very unusual course of asking the editor of the *Chronicle* "to send a reporter to the quarterly meeting," and the result was that there appeared in the paper a lengthy report of the meeting, which is very interesting, and being the only published verbatim report of a members' meeting, it is given here in full.

"LEIGH CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY.

"A quarterly meeting of the members took place in the society's room, Sugar Street, on Monday evening, Apl. 4, 1859, Mr. Enoch Holt in the chair. There was a large attendance.

"The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said they might consider themselves a large meeting of shop-keepers—a class to which he hoped they would all long belong. He enlarged upon the importance of self-help, and pointed out that by its means a great deal of the mischief produced by past neglect would be remedied.

"The Secretary read the quarterly balance sheet, and it was stated that 34 New Members had been admitted during the last quarter. The accounts showed a balance of clear profit of £152. 19s. 2d.—and the dividend, which last quarter was 1s. 4d.—would this quarter be 1s. 5d.

"The report of Messrs. W. Lee and P. Ward, the Auditors, was read, stating that the books had been kept very correctly, one small error only having been detected of 2d. in the ledger account of Interest.

"On the motion of Mr. Melbourne, seconded by Mr. R. Battersby, the accounts were passed.

"The Chairman congratulated the meeting that the society went on prosperously, and was likely to continue to do so because, of the experience they had gained. He did not think that any improvement could be made in their system of making purchases; he believed they could purchase provisions and other things quite as low, or lower, than any other person. Great advantage was derived from all their transactions being for ready cash. (Hear, hear.) Were it not for that, this quarter's dividend would not have been 1s. 5d. in the £. Another advantage they had now, which they did not possess at first, was that their friends were now acquainted with their system, and knew that they were permanently established.

"A proposal to have the balance sheet printed was opposed on the ground of unnecessary expense, but the Chairman, and Secretary, thought that every publicity was desirable, in order to confute those false reports which were abroad as to the society being likely to fail. It was therefore carried that 400 copies of the balance sheet should be printed.

"The Secretary gave notice of a special meeting to be held for an alteration of the 10th. Rule, changing the quarterly meeting from the 1st. Monday in the quarter to the 2nd. Tuesday or Wednesday, in order to afford more time for making up the accounts.

"The Chairman introduced as a subject of paramount importance the necessity for an immediate extension of the society's premises. Their progress had been such that the present premises were totally insufficient. In the first annual report the Committee had invited the members to take into serious consideration the propriety of providing premises of their own. The question now before the meeting was whether they would take further premises or build.

"Mr. James Hamblett stated that he found the capital of the Leeds Co-operative Society had been turned over seven times and a third in one year; in Leeds they had realised 25% on the gross capital in trade alone, and therefore he thought trading would be more profitable than building for themselves. He was in favour of taking other premises to which they could build ovens if there were none already, and the necessity for doing so was undoubted, while it could not be questioned that the Grocery Department also was very much overcrowded.

"The Chairman elucidated some of the advantages of the society possessing a good substantial building of their own, and mentioned the old warehouse of Messrs. Harrop, Taylor, & Pearson, in Bedford, as a place which might be made suitable, but it would cost money to make it suitable. He repeated that the demand for additional premises was irresistable as the society was losing trade for want of better accomodation.

"The Secretary said their great want was a better provision shop—in fact, a good commodious warehouse. They had a large stock at present, but they could advantageously lay in a still larger stock, if they had a store in which to warehouse it. This, together with a more extensive oven was their first and greatest want. It had been suggested that if they could not get a building suitable to their requirements, they should be obliged to build one. Now, it would not pay them very well to pay interest for all the money wherewith to build, but he showed that they had £300 to £400 available, which if employed in building would be rendered productive, because it would be providing a means of eventually relieving the society from rent. If they took other premises they would be put to expense in adapting them to their wants, and still not have all the conveniences which they would be ensured of by building a place of their own.

"The Chairman stated in detail a number of arrangements which would have to be carried out in a building in order to facilitate the baking and other operations. Everything would have to be laid out on the best possible plan so as to save as much labour as possible, and also it would be necessary to have a kneading machine. They might have good ovens at the old warehouse in Bedford, but would that situation be as good as anywhere else? they stood in need of a shop in the main street in Leigh, if they could find one.

"In answer to a question, Mr. W. Dickinson said he had been requested to see Mr. Lancashire, and though that Gentleman did not say conclusively that they could have the warehouse spoken of, he thought it was probable they might have it. The rent of the warehouse was £24; of the whole premises, including the house adjoining, £40.

"The Secretary said it might be taken for granted that those premises would be roomy enough, but they would require a terrible amount of alteration in order to suit this society.

"A Member said the cost of making the inside convenient would be as much as the inside of a new building.

"Mr. Melbourne asked if it would not be unwise to lay out money on other people's property when they might build a place of their own suitable and convenient in every way. If they were to erect one, and the society were to break up the next day, the property would be there, and it would be none the less valuable for having a good business connection attached to it. Land could be obtained much cheaper in Bedford than in Leigh, and it would be more advantageous to build a large store there; while if shops were requisite in other parts of the town they could be erected hereafter at convenience.

"Mr. Hamblett again spoke in favour of the strict employment of their capital in trade, and deprecated any idea of building premises with plate glass windows, and such other expensive matters as sometimes proved the ruin of tradesmen.

"The Secretary said an argument, to be worth anything, must prove what was required and no more. Mr. Hamblett proved rather too much, for if they must never build until they could get as much profit by building as by trade, they would never have to build at all, of course. They could not build when trade was depressed, and therefore they ought to go to work when trade was flourishing and large profits were made. Whether they built or not they would have to sink some capital in making the premises they occupied suitable to their wants. Unanimity on this subject was desirable, for the necessary capital must be raised by the members augmenting the number of their shares, as the capital in hand would be required for extending the business after the new building was finished.

"The Chairman said no owner of property would expend much in alterations because he would know there was a probability of the society building for themselves. The possession of a good building of their own would raise the society in the

esteem of the public; they would know there was something substantial connected with it.

"A Member thought it would be premature to build at present, and that the funds should not be locked up so that the society could not meet any draw on them which a depression of trade might produce.

"Mr. John Longton asked how often the Rochdale Pioneers had built in the last 15 years. They had £10,000 with which they were going to build a Factory, but was not that the first building they had ever thought of erecting?

"The Secretary, in reply to Mr. Longton, said the Rochdale Pioneers first took a weaving shop, then they bought it, and now they had enlarged it. (Hear, hear.) If the Leigh society would take a building, and then buy it, and then improve it, that would just be the thing.

"The Chairman said the probability of an extraordinary draw on the funds had been adverted to, and on that subject he wished to refer to Rochdale for another illustration. There had been heavy panics since they commenced operations, but they had managed to struggle through all difficulties, and the Leigh Society would doubtless do the same.

"Mr. James Cook said there were only two building sites available, one that of Mr. Bryce's, and the other belonging to Lord Lilford. There was not another place to be had anywhere, and neither of those he had mentioned were central situations. Bryce's was too dear and Lord Lilford's was neither one thing or the other. The alteration of Lancashire's Warehouse would be done for £50, and every convenience provided for; therefore, it would be better, in his opinion, to put off building until another opportunity.

"A Member: And we should at last lose the £50.

"Mr. Cook said they would not. Suppose they had the premises for 7 years, would not that £50. be realised many a time over in that period? Aye, it would be cleared in six months after the new premises were opened.

"Mr. J. Brocklehurst contended that it was usual for shopkeepers to lay out £100 or £200 when they took new premises. If they did not lay out money themselves in order to provide themselves with conveniences which were indispensible, the landlord might do it for them, but would he not raise their rent in proportion? (Hear, hear.) He thought their premises were quite near enough Leigh at present, but if anything was done in Leigh let it be merely the opening of a shop.

"Mr. Bold Hilton thought Lancashire's premises would require little alteration, and the erection of a new one would be the largest undertaking.

"The Secretary said it appeared to be taken for granted that their business must be extended one way or other, and that way something was gained. Well, from £800 to £1,000 would be required to build now premises, and were the members prepared to augment their shares in order to raise that money?

If that could not be done, then the old warehouse if possible must be taken.

"Mr. W. Dickinson suggested that it would be best for the Committee minutely to examine the old warehouse and ascertain whether the owner would make the alterations required.

"After a good many remarks from various speakers it was agreed to adjourn the meeting for a fortnight, in order that the Committee might make such inquiries, and in the meantime the members were requested to send statements to the 'Co-operative Store' of the number of additional shares they were willing to take towards building purposes.

"In reply to a question by the Secretary, it was stated that the Committee would be supported if in the meantime they took any offer which they might regard favourable.

"The Chairman said it would be very foolish not to accept any good offer; the Committee must act upon the motion for an adjournment, but take every advantage which might present itself.—The meeting then adjourned.

"(We understand that since this meeting the society have bought suitable premises in Bradshawgate.—Ed. *L.C.*)"

During the year 1859 great progress was made.

Early in the year a purchase of 600 bushels of wheat was made, and Adam Smith, the manager, was instructed to give a report as to the quantity of flour produced from it. At this time flour was being manufactured for the society from their own wheat at the "Old Hall" Mill, kept by Mr. Atherton.

In April, 1859, the society bought for £312, from Alice Smith, the shop at the corner of Albion-street—the site now occupied by the boot and shoe department. About £1,000 was spent in enlarging and improving the premises, which were completed about the end of the year, and made, what was considered at that time, very large and commodious premises. On the occupation of this shop one of the grocery and provision shops on the other side of the street was given up, and the society now occupied for the first time a shop of their own.

Many persons from the outlying districts of Astley, Lowton and Glazebury had for some time been members of the society, some of them at Astley right from the commencement in 1857. These zealous co-operators, in their enthusiasm for the cause, might have been seen shouldering their wallets and, with energetic

ASTLEY BRANCH
(Commenced 1859).

LOWTON BRANCH
(Commenced 1859).

strides, marching the distance to Leigh and back laden with the goods from the society's store.

This, as could only be expected, in the course of time began to be burdensome to them, and with the progress of the society, and its now assured success, they naturally began to ask for more convenient arrangements. One Astley member, still living, told the writer that when he was eleven years of age he walked to Leigh, to the society's first store in Sugar-street, and carried a parcel of provisions back to Astley every week.

The first branch opened was the one at Astley, in September, 1859, in a shop rented from Mr. John Holcroft, and previously occupied by Mr. B. Darbyshire, at the rent of £13 per annum. Fourteen years later this shop, along with four cottages and a beer-house, came into the market, and were bought by the society for the sum of £832.

Immediately on it becoming known that a shop was to be opened, about fifty persons sent in their names to become members. Mr. Wm. Dickinson, one of the pioneers of the society, and afterwards, for a long number of years, general manager, was the first shopman appointed to Astley Branch. Mr. John Wallis was appointed to act as treasurer for the branch, and he occupied this position for a long number of years, carrying the cash from Astley to Leigh about twice each week.

At the end of 1861 the number of members at Astley was eighty-six and their share capital £1,150.

At a tea party held at Astley in 1862, the Rev. Alfred Hewlett presided as chairman and spoke very encouragingly to the members.

The late Mr. C. H. Arrowsmith was always a good friend to the working people and liked to encourage them in any movement for their benefit. On the occasion of the tea party just referred to, a vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Arrowsmith "for allowing the hands to leave an hour earlier than usual," so as to get in time for the party. Some time later a reading-room was established at this branch, as there are records

of several grants of money being made to it. It has, however, been discontinued.

Closely following on the opening of the shop at Astley came a request for similar accommodation for the members who had been faithfully trudging all the way from Lowton to Leigh for two years. The business commenced in November, 1859, in a small cottage, one of a row of cottages, which were called "Bunker's Hill," so named on account of some man who belonged to the neighbourhood and who had been to America and taken part in the battle of that name. The premises at the time belonged to Mr. J. Johnson.

Mr. John Hamblett was the first shopman. About twelve months later Mr. Hamblett was transferred to Glazebury, and Mr. Jas. Dickinson took his place at Lowton.

Mr. James Pollitt was appointed treasurer, but was shortly afterwards succeeded by Mr. John Pearcey, who retained the position for a long number of years.

The cottage in which the business commenced, along with the three adjoining cottages, were bought by the society in 1864. The premises were always very low-lying, insanitary and inconvenient.

In 1892 the small shop or cottage was pulled down and a new one built, which is now one of the most convenient of the shops owned by the society, and has a commodious reading-room for the members over the shop.

The Lowton people, in addition to having the reputation of being clannish, were always of a very careful and thrifty disposition. This is proved by the fact that in the early history of the society the members left with the society a larger proportion of their dividends, to be added to their share account, than those of, perhaps, any other branch, and a larger proportion of them accumulated considerable sums in this way.

The society's position at Lowton was a somewhat peculiar one. A co-operative society, called the Lowton Common Friendly Co-operative Industrial Society, had been in existence since April, 1847, or ten years before the formation of the Leigh Society. The circumstances

which caused the commencement of this society were very similar to those at Leigh. A member of the society told the writer that the shopkeepers had been charging very high prices, flour being sold at 3s. 6d. per dozen, and other articles at similarly exhorbitant prices. Almost without exception the original members were silk weavers and consisted of about fifty members.

Owing to disagreements amongst the members, when the Leigh Society opened a branch in response to a numerously signed requisition, some of the Lowton members joined the Leigh Society. The two societies carried on business near to each other for about forty years, with scarcely any friction whatever arising.

In 1859, this society having been in existence for twelve years, had accumulated considerable funds, and had become a kind of close corporation, new members being seldom admitted except when near relatives of existing members.

The old Lowton Society kept on in the conduct of its business in the same primitive fashion as at the commencement, the members taking turns at serving out the goods ; and in the end the society, as was only to be expected when new members ceased to be admitted, gradually worked itself out by a process of what could only be described as self-strangulation.

In December, 1859, on the opening of the large new shop at the corner of Albion-street, previously referred to, one of the grocery shops on the other side of Bradshawgate was given up and the other converted into a drapery shop.

A certain amount of drapery goods had been sold along with the groceries from the commencement of the occupation of this shop ; the first purchase of drapery which was sold in the grocery shop being £17. 10s., from Isaac Thorp and Son, Manchester, and was made by John Longton and Adam Smith.

In February, 1859, a minute appears on the books stating " that we extend our drapery department as early as possible." The removal of the grocery business to the new shop thus gave the opportunity of " extending the business."

In the following September an advertisement appears in the *Leigh Chronicle* for "a competent draper, a resident in Leigh preferred," and on October 24th Mr. Peter Ward was appointed to manage the department at the wages of 17s. per week. Mr. Ward for some time resided on the premises, paying a rent of 2s. 3d. per week, which amount was to cover the use of three rooms, kitchen, &c., and also "gas for picking," the latter indicating that either Mr. Ward, or his wife, augmented his salary as shopman by picking silk in the evenings. Mr. Ward had occupied the position of auditor during 1859. He, along with the grocery manager (Mr. Adam Smith), were deputed to go to Manchester to purchase a stock of drapery, and this they did to the extent of £610—an amount which caused no little consternation to some of the more timid members of the committee. Seeing, however, that the sales for the first complete quarter amounted to £297, or one-half the stock, there was clearly no cause for alarm.

The drapery business continued to grow, and it is evident that a considerable stock of goods was kept in the shop, for in August, 1860, an insurance policy for £1,000 was taken out on the stock.

Mr. Ward, who was the father of our present highly respected Director of Education for Leigh, remained with the society as manager of the drapery department until August, 1863, when he commenced business on his own account and was very successful.

He was succeeded by Mr. John Smith, better known as "Lord John," who had been engaged for some time as assistant to Mr. Ward.

The total sales at the shops during 1859 was £11,055, as compared with £6,387 for 1858, and the amount paid in dividend £592, as against £269. The number of members had increased from 280 to 557, and the share capital from £922 to £2,846.

BEDFORD BRANCH
(Commenced 1860).

GLAZEBURY BRANCH
(Commenced 1860).

CHAPTER IV.

1860-1861.

BRANCH SHOPS OPENED IN BEDFORD, GLAZEBURY, GOLBORNE; TOO MUCH MONEY; £1,000 INVESTED IN SAVINGS BANK; NON-TRADING MEMBERS TO WITHDRAW; SHOPS TO BE OPEN ALL DAY.

> "Better aim at a star than shoot down a well;
> You'll hit higher."

THE members' deposits increased so rapidly that the society soon had more money than was required in the business, and the sum of £200 was invested in the "Commercial Bank," being the Manchester and Liverpool District Bank, which has continued to be the society's banker to the present day. An investment of £100 was also made with the Rochdale Corn Mill Co.

In April, 1860, a branch shop was opened in King-street (now Brunswick-street), Bedford. Mr. Wm. Dickinson was thereupon transferred from Astley Branch to take charge of the new shop. Mr. Samuel Unsworth taking his place at Astley.

In October of the same year another branch shop was opened at Bury-lane (Glazebury), in a small shop at the end of Hurst Hall-lane, owned by Mr. W. Hill. In February, 1862, the business was transferred to the premises owned by Messrs. Gill and Hartley at the south end of the block of cottages adjoining their mill.

The rent paid for this shop was £24 per year, and continued at this sum for 42 years, until the society erected the handsome shop on the opposite side of the street in 1902. Over this shop, as at Lowton, a commodious reading-room is provided.

Mr. John Hamblett, who had been managing the shop at Lowton, was transferred to Glazebury. Mr. James Dickinson taking his place at Lowton. Mr. Henry Hill, brother to the secretary, was appointed treasurer for this branch, and retained the position for a long number of years.

Rapid progress continued to be made, and by the end of the year the membership had increased to 725 and the share capital to £5,574. The sales for the year being £18,968, or an increase over the previous year of 71½ per cent.

Although the progress of the society had been very satisfactory, the committee of management had many troubles to contend against; complaints from members and occasionally insubordination amongst employés. Records appear on the minute books of servants being summarily dismissed and their wages paid in lieu of notice; and in other cases they were brought before the committee and "severely reprimanded for their conduct," but there is no record of what the offences were, except in one case where the chairman was "authorised to reprimand one of the shopmen for selling goods on credit without the orders of the committee." They also at the same meeting reiterated their determination to adhere to the ideal with which they set out at the commencement of the society, of doing away with the credit system, which had been to a large extent the means in the past of preventing the working people from getting into habits of thrift, and freeing themselves from the fetters with which they were bound, wherever they were fast to a private tradesman with a "shop book." To this end the committee decided "that notices be posted in all the shops, that all business is done for ready-money." The bakers seem to have given a lot of trouble. Mention has already been made of a rather dramatic change

in this department almost at the beginning of the society's baking operations. On September 10th, 1860, the following minute appears on the books :—" That Adam Smith (the manager) inform Thos. Farrington (the baker) that he will be held responsible, and that no wages will be paid for any sour bread after this date." And at the next meeting—" That it is the opinion of this committee, that the bad bread complained of, is caused by the wilful neglect of the Bakers, and that the falling off in the sale of it, has arisen from that cause, and it is their opinion, that the bakers in this case are not justly entitled to their full wages."

This year, amongst other things, witnessed the purchase of the first horse and cart for the society.

To-day the society has 39 horses, a steam motor wagon, 45 lurries, carts, and other conveyances.

Prior to 1852 co-operative societies were governed by the Friendly Societies Acts. As Catherine Webb states in her work on " Industrial Co-operation "—" In the old days when goods were simply the property of the members there was nothing to prevent any one member from appropriating them all to himself, the law regarding members as partners. There was no legal remedy for fraud, and some of the earlier societies suffered greatly from their unprotected condition ; but the Act of 1852, " the Charter of Co-operators," gave a legal status to co-operative societies."

They had still no legal authority to devote any portion of their profits to establish reading-rooms, libraries, lectures, or other means of educating themselves. This, however, was done to a limited extent by some societies, and notably by the Rochdale Pioneers. Our own society had devoted £54 towards a reading-room and library before they had any legal authority to do so.

At the beginning of 1861 the various co-operative societies then in existence began to agitate for an amendment of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1852. Petitions were prepared, and one was placed in each of the society's shops, and being signed by almost the whole of the members, made a formidable volume to be sent to the House of Commons.

The result of the agitation was, that an amendment to the Act was passed in 1862, by which the formation of educational funds became allowable. The amount which members might hold in shares was increased from £100 to £200. Societies were recognised as corporate bodies, with limited liability, and they were permitted to take up shares in other similar societies.

On January 28th, 1861, it was decided "That the kitchen and back room at the drapery shop be fitted up for a Reading-room, and that E. Holt, J. Prescott, and R. Wainwright be appointed to carry it out; with power to add to their number."

Up to this date the reading-room had been kept in the room in Sugar-street, where the society commenced business, and was only kept open in the evening. In the new premises it began to be kept open from 9 o'clock in the morning. Mr. Joshua Cleworth was engaged to look after it in the evening, and for which he was paid 5s. per week, shortly afterwards increased to 7s. 6d., and again to 15s. He retained the position until 1865.

There is a resolution of the committee on February 4th, 1861—"That no wages be paid to shopmen, when absent from their duties through sickness."

At the present day this sounds rather harsh treatment, and we have certainly improved in this respect.

This, however, was modified six months later by a resolution—"Than in future all cases of sickness, be laid before the committee before wages are deducted."

As share capital continued to be invested faster than was required for the business, it was found necessary to invest the sum of £1,000 in the Leigh Savings Bank.

This rapid increase in the members' investments was a clear indication of the general confidence as to the society's stability, and it would also appear that some were simply investing money for the sake of the interest to be obtained, viz., 5 per cent, and not with the intention of becoming trading members, for on August 26th of the same year, it was decided "That the secretary prepare a draft circular, to be printed and sent to each non-trader, requesting them to withdraw."

This was a very necessary step to take; for it was

GOLBORNE (HEATH STREET) BRANCH
(Commenced 1861).

unfair to expect the society to pay 5 per cent on money which they did not require in the business, and had to invest at about 2½ per cent, when at the same time the member was doing nothing towards producing the interest, by making his purchases from the society. Members of this kind may be described, not simply as drones, but as bloodsuckers.

Although the year 1861 was one of great commercial depression, the society continued to make steady progress. 165 new members joined during the year, and the share capital increased to £7,011. As an indication of the depression in trade at this time the committee decided "to suspend the fines for non-payment of contributions."

As an illustration of the advanced views held by some of the members forty-six years ago, a requisition was sent to the committee asking for the reading-room to be opened on a Sunday. This proved, however, a little too revolutionary, even for our progressive pioneers.

About April, 1861, a numerously signed requisition was sent to the committee from Golborne, asking for a branch shop to be opened there. Two months later a meeting was held, and on September 9th it was decided to rent a shop from the "Oddfellows' Committee" at £18 per annum. Sixty persons immediately joined as members. The shop was opened in December of the same year. Mr. Wm. Johnson was engaged as shopman at 15s. per week, to be increased to 17s. in three months. A few weeks later he changed places with John Hamblett, who had been at Glazebury for about fourteen months.

There was a bakery in connection with this branch, which was immediately prepared for use, and Robert Ashton was engaged as first baker at 17s. per week.

In December, 1865, the society purchased for £350, from the Exors. of J. Kenyon, a house and land in Worsley-street, Golborne, and erected on a portion of the land a shop and dwelling-house at a further cost of £900.

On the completion of these alterations, Mr. Hamblett was allowed to occupy the cottage, with rent, coals and

gas free, "in consideration of the assistance to be rendered in the shop by his wife."

A reading-room was also opened in February, 1867.

During 1901 and 1902 very considerable extensions were made to the premises, which now forms one of the largest of the society's branches, and comprises grocery, butchering, drapery, and boot and shoe shops, and a large bakery.

Two notable events occurred during this year (1861); one was the decision to allow a dividend of 10d. per £ on the purchases of non-members. This was an entirely new departure, and was done with the evident intention of attracting custom from persons who did not care to join as members. The other was the commencement of what is known as the "Leakage System" of accounts in connection with the branches. The resolution puts it in the form, "That an account of the goods sent to Golborne be kept at the Retail price and balance struck at the end of the Quarter in the usual way."

The leakage system, in a much more elaborate form, has been continued to the present day; a complete record of the leakage account of each shop from 1875 to the present day is still preserved.

GOLBORNE (CHURCH STREET) BRANCH
(Commenced 1900).

GOLBORNE (LEGH STREET) BRANCH
(Commenced 1902).

CHAPTER V.

1862–1863.

Branch Shops at Atherton, Westleigh and Newton-le-Willows; First Delegates to a Conference; The Society as Cattle Keepers; The Cotton Famine.

"Taught by that power that pities me,
I learn to pity them."

IN June, 1862, the first branch shop in Atherton district was opened in a warehouse, in Church-street, at the corner of Mealhouse-lane, owned by Mr. Wm. Hesketh.

The first attempt at co-operation in Atherton had been made about eighteen months earlier. The committee of this society consisted of Messrs. James Yates, Thos. Smith Adam Bowker and Allan Hodson. The shop was next door to the "Jolly Nailor Inn," Market-street, and is now occupied by Mr. Howcroft, butcher. The old shop, however, has been pulled down and rebuilt. William Marsh was the manager. The effort however, was a failure from the beginning. After about eighteen months the manager left and opened a shop on the opposite side of the street.

The Leigh Society was approached and asked to take over the business, and the old stock and utensils were bought for the sum of £76, and transferred to the old warehouse in Church-street, previously mentioned.

Mr. Allan Hodson, one of the committee-men of the old society, was appointed the first manager of the shop,

and he kept the position for nearly twenty years. Prior to this appointment he had been assisting in the old shop in Brunswick-street, Bedford. Mr. Hodson was brother to William Hodson, who is still managing the central grocery shop in Albion-street.

The old warehouse continued to be occupied for nearly three years. In February, 1865, the business was removed to the shop at the corner of the commencement of the Old and New Bolton-roads; the owner being Mr. Philip Manley, and the rent paid £10 per year. The shop is now occupied as a stationer's shop by Mr. Broadbent.

In February, 1872, the business was again removed to a shop in Church-street, owned by Mrs. Norbury, and was taken on a seven years' lease, at £21 per year. The site is now occupied by the Manchester and County Bank.

In 1881, the site now occupied by the grocery and drapery shops was taken on a 99 years' lease from Lord Lilford, the old building on the site being given in free. About £260 was spent on the building to make it suitable for the society's business. This building was entirely demolished in 1899, and the present commodious grocery and drapery shops erected.

During the rebuilding of the premises, a shop in Market-street, next to the Parish Church, and now occupied by Mr. Baxendale, was taken on a short lease.

As a proof of the courage and the confidence of the committee, witness the following resolutions passed by them in July, 1862, only five years after the society commenced business, in the simple and modest way previously described :—

Resolved: "That the question of having an agent in Ireland for collecting Butter and Eggs be further considered at the next meeting."

Resolved: "That Adam Smith and James Roach go to Ireland on Monday next."

The two persons named went to Ireland, and their joint expenses for the journey was the modest sum of £5. 0s. 3d.

ATHERTON (CHURCH STREET) BRANCH
(Commenced 1862).

ATHERTON (BAG LANE) BRANCH
(Commenced 1896).

ATHERTON (BOLTON ROAD) BRANCH
(Commenced 1899).

ATHERTON (TYLDESLEY ROAD) BRANCH
(Commenced 1901).

The visit was apparently not very successful, as they only brought back butter to the value of £46. 3s. 3d.

Two months later the manager, Adam Smith, was sent to Cork to purchase 200 firkins of butter. His expenses on this occasion being £2. 19s. 3d.

At this time, and for many years afterwards, it was the custom to purchase large quantities of Irish butter at the end of the summer season, to last throughout the winter. The butter was covered with salt and kept in a cool cellar.

The committee were evidently well aware of the importance of propaganda work, and for this purpose 1,000 co-operative tracts were ordered and distributed at Leigh and the other outside branches.

Amongst other notable events during the year 1862 were the appointment of Mr. Richard Greenough, the father of Aldermen T. R. and Richard Greenough, as one of the society's arbitrators; and the alteration of the rules so as to admit of the members of the management committee being increased from five to nine, and for increasing the amount which members might invest in shares from £100 to £200.

In December of the same year the first delegates to a conference were appointed and consisted of Wm. Hill, the secretary, and Isaac Broadhurst, one of the committee. The conference was held at Oldham.

The society's business, during 1862, maintained the substantial increase both in membership, share capital and sales, which had been shown during each of the preceding years.

During the year 1863 two more branch shops were opened. The first at "Barlow's Factory," Westleigh, in May, in premises owned by Mr. James Taylor, on the opposite side of the road to the premises now occupied. A rent of £12 per year was paid. The first shopman was Mr. Robert Watson, and his salary to commence was 15s. per week. David Grundy was appointed treasurer for this branch.

In June, 1874, a plot of land was taken on the opposite side of the street from Mr. Richard Leigh, and a shop and two cottages were erected on the site. Mr. Joseph

Limon was the architect. Some years later the shop was considerably enlarged by the addition of one of the cottages.

The second shop opened during the year was in October, at Newton-le-Willows, in response to a numerously signed requisition.

A small society had been in existence at Earlestown since 1860, but they were not strong enough to entertain the opening of a branch; hence the appeal to Leigh Society, owing to their having a well-established branch at Golborne, not far away.

Immediately on the shop being opened, 51 persons gave in their names as members.

The shop was taken on rental from Mr. J. Stone. Afterwards it became the property of Mr. T. Winstanley, from whom the society purchased it, along with four adjoining cottages in the principal street, in 1866.

The first shopman appointed was Mr. Jas. Speakman, at the salary of 18s. per week.

In January, 1863, the society commenced its first current account with its bankers, the Manchester and Liverpool District Bank.

The society having a large plot of vacant land in Ellesmere-street decided to make bricks from the clay, to be used in connection with the erection of a corn mill, &c., which will be shortly referred to.

The resolution referring to this is as follows:—"That bricks be made from the clay to the extent of our land on the north side, and about 21ft. wide, and that Joseph Cunliffe be engaged to make them at 15/- per thousand, including the excavation."

It is recorded that the services of the town's bellman were requisitioned for the purpose of "warning all persons to keep away from the brickyard." The site of this brickyard is now covered with the new stables.

The quarterly meetings at this time were held in the Christian Meeting-room, in Back King-street.

The solicitude of the committee for the comfort of the animals owned by the society is shown by resolutions appearing on the minutes from time to time.

For example: "That the horses have a rest to-morrow." "That the Astley shopman see to the pigs being fed on Sundays."

It would appear from this that either the shopman or someone else had been "clemming" the pigs on this day of the week.

One resolution on the books states: "That the Manager get 1 cwt. of charcoal for the pigs." Whether this was intended as an article of food is not stated.

Another resolution respecting the pigs states: "That the live stock committee be instructed to examine and report to the next meeting, the best method of preventing sudden death among the pigs, and also the best mode of fattening them in a shorter time."

This resolution seems somewhat contradictory; for in the first part, a means is sought for preserving the lives of the pigs, and in the second, how to hasten forward the time of their death.

At this time and for some years afterwards, until the weaving shed was built, the society kept a very large number of pigs at the Depôt, Ellesmere-street A long range of styes were located in the space which is now between the corn mill and the weaving shed.

Bold Hilton, one of the pioneers of the society, was in charge of these and very proud of them he was. The society frequently exhibited these pigs at the agricultural show, as well as horses and dogs, and oftentimes got prizes. On one occasion "Owd Bold," as he was called, had two droves of twelve pigs each at the show, and he naturally considered them the best in the show. The judges, however, only awarded him the second prize, which Bold indignantly refused, telling them in forcible "Lancashire" that it was because they were "Co-operative" pigs that they did not give them 1st prize. The society had also a famous mastiff named "Lion" which had obtained both 1st and 2nd prizes, and later on an exceptionally large black retriever named "Bright," which also took prizes at the shows. He came, however, to an untimely end, having to be shot owing to his biting a member of the committee.

On several occasions a famous horse belonging to the society, named "Punch," was also exhibited. There is, however, no record of a prize being obtained for him. On the death of this horse several unusually large gall-stones were taken from him, one weighing no less than 9 lbs., which is still preserved by Mr. Darwell, the veterinary surgeon, and was at that time sent by him to the Veterinary Surgeons' Institute in London.

The agricultural shows were at this time held in a large field behind the Town Hall.

Another resolution on the minute book at this time is of rather doubtful significance, at least so far as to the comfort and convenience of those concerned; it was—"That the cows be kept until they have consumed a load of meat each." This sounds very much as if their days were numbered.

It is worth recording that in this year Mr. Geo. Dickinson, who was for a long time Clerk to the Local Boards and District Council, acted as auditor to the society.

A resolution of the committee in October states: "That each Branch be supplied with a clock, with the exception of Chowbent and Westleigh."

It would not be safe to assume from this that the shopmen at Chowbent and Westleigh were such good timekeepers themselves that no clock was required in their shops.

The Cotton Famine.

1861 to 1864.

During the year 1862, when the full effect of the disastrous American slave war between the North and South began to be felt, the depression in trade became very acute throughout the country, and particularly in the cotton manufacturing districts in the North of England. Mills were closed, and thousands of people were thrown out of work. Those towns which were mostly dependent on the cotton industry suffered the most—such were Ashton, Bacup, Dukinfield, Heywood, Hyde, Middleton, Mossley, Rawtenstall, Stalybridge, and a few others.

Relief committees were formed in the districts most affected.

In Leigh and the surrounding districts, also, the distress was very acute. In 1863, in Leigh Union alone, there were 1,500 persons in receipt of outdoor relief, an increase of over 50 per cent over the normal number.

The mills belonging to Messrs. Farnworth Bros., Bedford ; Richard Guest, Firs-lane ; Barlow's Factory, Westleigh ; and Norbury's, Bag-lane, were entirely closed.

Messrs. Jones Bros. for some time were only working one day a week, and Messrs. Tunnicliffe and Hampson, J. and J. Hayes, J. Knott and Co., and Messrs. Brewis's, at Golborne, only two days per week.

A local relief committee was formed in Leigh, Dr. Evans acting as secretary, and Richd. Guest, treasurer.

For some time over 1,000 persons per week were being assisted by the committee, between 200 and 300 were assisted with clothing, or to enable them to get things they had pawned.

The weekly expenditure of the committee on food alone was at one time £60. And altogether it is stated that 8 per cent of the population were in receipt of relief from the committee. A sum of about £1,260 was collected in subscriptions, including £200 from the Mansion House Fund. Our society contributed the sum of £20.

A relief committee was also formed at Atherton where about the same amount was dealt with.

In some districts, in connection with the local relief committee, the majority of the members of which were private tradesmen, the question was raised as to whether co-operators were to be entitled to relief.

Not only were they refused money, but the girls of parents who were co-operators were refused admission into the sewing classes which were formed, or to share in the distribution of articles of clothing. Nothing of this kind, however, occurred at Leigh, so far as is known.

These were very trying times to co-operative societies. Many predictions had been made that they would fall to pieces like a pack of cards whenever any serious

reverse took place in any of the staple trades of the country. However, they stood the test bravely, not one of the societies failed, and at the end of the cotton panic the societies were as numerous and as strong as before the panic set in.

Indeed the after effect of these trying times of adversity could scarcely be other than a stimulus to the co-operative movement; working people who had not taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the societies of saving the dividends on their purchases for the proverbial "rainy day," would envy those of their fellows whom they saw were able to draw on these savings; and there can be no question that the saving to the poor rates, owing to these circumstances, must have been very considerable.

So far as our society is concerned, it is very remarkable that, notwithstanding the great amount of distress prevailing in the district, which one would naturally expect to act as a check on the society's business, the progress made was, however, greater than before. From 1861 to 1864 the membership had increased from 806 to 1,664. The sales from £18,552 to £32,712. The profits from £961 to £2,287, and the members' share capital from £7,842 to £22,629. Very few societies in Lancashire or Yorkshire had such an experience as this.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CORN MILL, 1863.

"The mill will never grind with the water that is past."

NO greater proof of the courage and unbounded confidence of our pioneers need be given than the way they tackled the question of the erection of a corn mill. Indeed, their courage might well have been described as recklessness by an outsider, who considered the matter solely from a financial point of view. For a small body of working men to embark on the expenditure of about £5,000 in the erection of a corn mill, when they at the time had only about £1,000 of available capital and no reserve funds to fall back upon, was, to say the least, a very risky experiment; and especially so when it is remembered that the members of the society at the time could not consume one-fourth of the productive capacity of the mill, and that any additional trade would in all probability be confined to a few small societies within a radius of, say, ten miles. The success of the society was dependent upon a steady quarterly dividend being paid; and the failure of this productive experiment might very easily have spelt ruin to the society.

It should be remembered that this was taking place at a time of great depression in trade, owing to the cotton famine, referred to in the last chapter.

A safer course would have been to have erected the mill out of transferable instead of withdrawable shares,

so that the shareholders would receive only the profit made, whether large or small, without interfering with the ordinary dividend on the members' purchases from the shops.

An attempt was made in 1861 to carry out this idea, and work the corn mill as a separate society, but nothing came of it.

Both the Leeds and the Rochdale Co-operative Corn Mills were erected and worked independently of the distributive or retail shop business, and could not, therefore, be a menace to the ordinary quarterly dividend which members expect from the purely retail shop business.

But our working-men pioneers knew no fear and went right ahead, and the result has entirely justified their confidence, for the corn mill has from the beginning, with the exception of one or two brief periods, been a conspicuous success.

It has been previously stated that the committee had been in the habit, from a very early period in the society's history, of purchasing wheat from farmers and having it ground and made into flour at the "Old Hall" Mill, worked by Mr. Atherton.

The first recorded step in connection with the corn mill business is a resolution passed by the committee on May 7th, 1860, which states "that steps be taken to rent or build a corn mill," and the following month Wm. Hill, the secretary, was instructed to wait on Mr. Atherton with a view to renting the "Old Hall" Mill. Nothing, however, was done in this direction. The question stood in abeyance until the end of the following year, when an attempt was made to take on lease the "Pennington" Corn Mill, situated near to the gas works in Gas-street, at that time owned by Wm. Atherton.

On this occasion there was every appearance of a bargain being fixed up, for it is stated on the minutes of December 14th and 18th, 1861, that a draft agreement was submitted and approved for the mill being taken for one year. In this case, however, the committee were inclined to be cautious, and before finally

settling they decided to take the opinion of Mr. Taylor, solicitor, as to whether it could be done "with safety to the society."

Whether it was owing to Mr. Taylor's advice is not stated, but the lease was not completed and the bargain fell through.

After an interval of another twelve months we have a resolution that "a portion of the 'Towns field' be leased for a corn mill." The "Towns field" was the site now occupied by the corn mill and the weaving shed, and belonged to the Bridgewater trustees.

The committee had at last found a site for the corn mill, and in this case there was no turning back.

The committee's report on the balance sheet for June, 1862, states that "since the Committee last addressed you, they have commenced the erection of the new Corn Mill, which is progressing favourably, and will be an honour to the Society; and the Committee are encouraged to appeal to the members for their cordial co-operation, to enable them to carry out this great work."

Mr. Millington was engaged to prepare specifications for the corn mill, and his son Benjamin as clerk of works. Tenders for the work were asked for through the *Leigh Chronicle*.

The tender of Mr. Wm. Boardman, builder, Bradshawgate, Leigh, was accepted for the erection of the building.

The engine, boiler and mill gearing were supplied by Messrs. Musgrave and Sons, of Bolton.

The foundation stone was laid by the president, Mr. Enoch Holt, on June 23rd, 1862, and it is recorded that the bricksetters who assisted were given "lowence" to the amount of 10s.

During the remainder of the year the committee were exceedingly busy holding frequent meetings, and criticising the work as it progressed.

The erection of the building was completed by the end of the year, and in the *Leigh Chronicle* for December 27th, 1862, appears the following:—"The Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society has just erected a sub-

stantial and lofty Corn Mill, which speaks volumes for the success of the movement. The building is now a conspicuous feature in the Town and reflects great credit on Mr. Boardman, the contractor, and Mr. Limon, who has so efficiently superintended the works."

Mr. Jno. Pritchard was engaged in November, 1862, " to superintend the fitting of the Corn Mill gearing " at the salary of 25s. per week, and on the completion of the mill he became the first manager or foreman miller.

Samuel Worrall was engaged as first assistant at 20s. per week. Worrall had previously had charge of the " Old Hall " Mill, where, as previously stated, the society had for several years been sending wheat to be ground.

Pritchard and Worrall, along with the engineer, James Evans, were the only men employed in the mill for a number of years. Corn milling being a business which requires very little manual labour in proportion to the value of the goods produced.

Mr. Pritchard continued as foreman of the mill until 1869, when he was succeeded by Mr. Valentine Farrington. Worrall stayed with the society until 1873.

Adam Smith, the general manager, continued as buyer of grain for the mill until June, 1867, when the work was placed in the hands of the corn mill manager.

On New Year's Day, 1863, a monster tea party was held to celebrate the opening of the corn mill, and the following were appointed a Tea Party Committee :— Messrs. Arnold Hampson, Robert Wainwright, Henry Woodward, Thos. Hurst, Henry Brooks, Richd. Foulds, William Boydell, John Prescott, and John Smith (Lord John), with power to add to their number. The price of admission was fixed at 8d. for males and 6d. for females, and 3d. for the entertainment.

Those who have had to do with large tea parties know how difficult it is, even with all modern conveniences, to carry through the arrangements smoothly ; and we can well imagine the difficulties of the Tea Party Committee, none of whom would have had any experience of so large a party, when they had to provide for no less than 1,300 persons, and when the tea and

provisions had to be carried up four or five different heights of rooms. No wonder that, as one old member still living states, there was great confusion, in fact it was a case of "muddling through." However, all passed off satisfactorily.

Mr. J. C. Farn, of Eccles, delivered an admirable address on "Co-operation," which was fully reported in the *Leigh Chronicle*.

The editor of the *Chronicle*, in his comments, states: "The managers and promoters were literally overwhelmed with success. Such a scene has never before been witnessed in Leigh. Upwards of 1,300 partook of tea, and numbers were turned back."

Such was the auspicious commencement of our corn mill, which has proved to be one of the few conspicuous successes in co-operative production.

Omitting a few brief periods in its history, which will be afterwards referred to, the mill has been a profit-making concern all along.

In the early years of its career the grinding of the grain was done by the old fluted stones, and it was not until 1887, or twenty-four years later, that steel rollers were introduced.

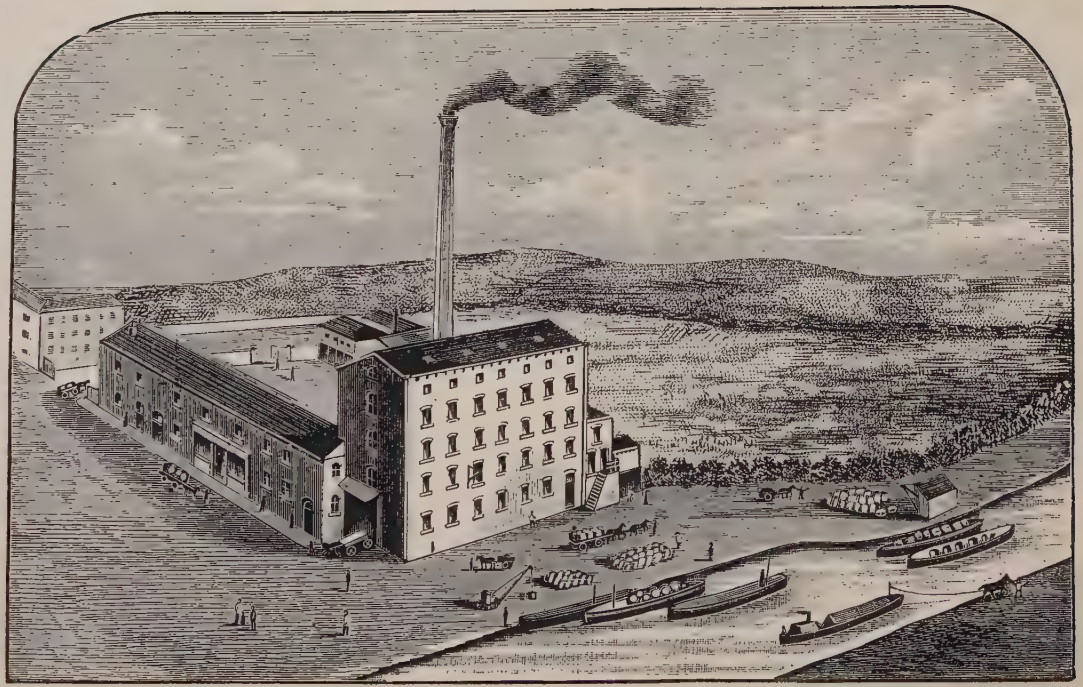
Corn milling machinery has been revolutionised during the past twenty years. In our own mill the machinery has been almost entirely replaced with new, on three different occasions, as it is absolutely necessary to keep up to date with the latest improvements.

As a proof of the soundness of the financial position of our corn mill, thanks to an enlightened policy on the part of the committee in providing adequate depreciation and reserve funds, it may be interesting to state that the entire cost of the buildings and machinery from the commencement has been the sum of £18,536. This has been reduced, by depreciation and occasional special allowances from the profits, by the amount of £14,096, so that the nominal value appearing on the books at the present time is only the small sum of £4,400.

Additional extensions and new machinery are at the present time being erected, and nearly the whole cost of these will be paid for out of the reserve fund.

Few co-operative productive concerns can show a record such as this.

It is a noteworthy fact that, although on the commencement of the corn mill scheme the society had only about £1,000 of available capital, so strong was the confidence of the members in the stability of the concern, that after spending about £5,000 on the completion of the mill, they had in hand available unemployed capital amounting to over £3,000, and this took place in the days of the Cotton famine, previously referred to.



Corn Mill and Depot, 1863.

CHAPTER VII.

1863–1864.

Erection of Depot, Bakery, Stables, &c.; Mr. Holt (First President) Retires; Mr. Wm. Boydell Elected; Clog and Shoe Business Troublesome; Sub-Committees Formed; Boothstown Branch Opened; An Incident at the Astley Bakery.

"Therein the patient must minister to himself."

FOLLOWING on the completion of the corn mill and the continual growth of the shop business, it was soon found that other extensive developments were necessary in the shape of additional buildings. The committee had no sooner got the corn mill successfully floated than they took in hand the erection of a central depôt or warehouse and retail shop adjoining the mill; which comprised also a bakery, shop and offices, with a large meeting-room over; also stables in the rear of the same; and also a house for the manager, for which he paid a rent of 3s. 6d. per week, his wages at the time being 30s. per week. These extensions involved an expenditure of about £2,500.

Mr. Richard Hindley, who along with Mr. Wm. Hill were the first appointed auditors to the society, was put in charge of the warehouse and shop at the wage of 18s. per week. Mr. Hindley had almost from the commencement of the society been actively engaged

in its work. First as one of the persons to serve in the shop at night at the salary of 3d. per hour. Afterwards he received 3s. per week as assistant in one of the shops, until he was appointed warehouseman. Mr. Hindley continued in charge of the warehouse until June, 1886, having thus been an employé of the society for a period of twenty-eight years.

To show that the committee were determined to keep well in touch with the society's business, witness the following resolution passed on August 31st, 1863 :— "That the Corn Mill be under the control and management of the head miller (Mr. Pritchard) both inside and outside the mill, subject to the approval of the Committee of Management; also that the aforesaid miller be required to furnish the Committee with a full and correct report weekly, of the progress and condition of the Mill; what has been ground during the week, what is in grinding, what has been delivered from the Mill, and a general statement of the Machinery and the hands in work."

Another resolution illustrating the watchfulness of the committee was the following :—"That Mr. Pritchard be requested to report why the one pair of stones was not ready when the new cover was ready."

Who could have believed that a few silk weavers could have shown such conspicuous business ability, and have so far piloted the society successfully to the magnitude it had then attained.

In December of the same year it was resolved— "That 3 tickets for the Annual Tea Party be sent to each of the neighbouring Societies."

This was the first occasion of fraternization with other societies, with the exception of the advice sought from the Rochdale Pioneers at the commencement of the society. It was, however, an astute move on the part of the committee, as they doubtless had in view the business of the corn mill and desired to enlist the support of the societies, many of whom, be it stated, afterwards joined the society as members, and in most cases have continued so to the present day.

The commencement of 1864 saw a change in the

MR. ENOCH HOLT
(President, 1857 to 1864).

MR. WM. BOYDELL
(President, 1864 and 1865).

presidency, Mr. Enoch Holt, who had occupied that position since the commencement of the society, retiring.

A very necessary, although some might consider arbitrary, resolution was passed by the general meeting of members on January 11th, 1864, as follows:—"That no person be allowed to be a member of the Committee, who is in receipt of wages from the society; nor any person who has a son or son-in-law or brother or brother-in-law, or nephew who is in receipt of wages from the Society."

In the latest revision of the society's rules, in 1895, even further restrictions as to relatives are introduced.

Mr. Holt had for about four months, whilst he was president, been engaged in doing joinery work in the corn mill at the salary of 15s. per week, a wage far below the present-day trade-union list. It was this dual capacity of Mr. Holt, both as president and employé, which had evidently led to the regulation above-named being passed.

Mr. Holt was an extraordinary man—a man of great courage and perseverance. He was of an exceedingly genial disposition. He had the habit of taking everything philosophically, nothing seemed to trouble him. He was a voluble talker, so much so that when he once got started it was difficult to stop him. That he was a man of great tact is proved by the leading part he took in steering the society through its difficulties right from its commencement. A "Jack of all trades" and a real master of every one he took in hand. He was a teacher at the old Mechanics' Institution in Newton-street; a teacher of music, and made a piano entirely himself, and which is still in use. He was the leader of the Leigh hand-bell ringers, composed and arranged music for them, and led them to victory on three occasions over all comers at Belle Vue, Manchester. He was famous amongst the silk weavers for the making of lathes for their looms. No lathes being considered so good as those made by "Old Enoch." Whilst he was engaged in doing joinery work in the corn mill, he was instructed to make a table 8ft. by 5ft., with four turned legs. This table was used in the committee-

room for a long number of years until the erection of the new offices, and is still in use in the Primitive Methodists' Chapel, Glazebury.

Mr. Holt's courage did not desert him even in his old age, for he married for the second time when he was over 70 years of age, and there are several children of the marriage still living.

A special vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Holt for his services to the society.

Mr. William Boydell was thereupon elected president in place of Mr. Holt.

Mr. Boydell, however, only retained the position for one year, for at the next annual meeting on January 9th, 1865, Mr. Henry Brooks was elected.

At the same annual meeting, January 11th, 1864, when Mr. Holt retired, Mr. Geo. Dickinson and Mr. Wm. Lee were re-elected auditors, and an additional auditor was appointed in the person of Mr. George Parr, who continued as auditor until 1881.

For some time the business of the clog and shoe department, which from the commencement had been under the management of Mr. George Wilkinson, was not satisfactory to the committee. The sales did not increase as they ought to have done. Complaints were made of the stock being kept in an unsatisfactory condition, and bad stock accumulating. In consequence of this state of things, the committee decided on February 1st, 1864, to terminate Mr. Wilkinson's services.

Mr. Watson Raynor succeeded Mr. Wilkinson, as manager of this department, at the salary of 21s. per week.

Mr. Raynor's management only lasted six months, and, as he had brought about no better result, his services were also terminated in August of the same year.

The committee at this time seriously considered the question of giving up this branch of business altogether.

However, they decided to give it another trial, and appointed Mr. Wm. Guest to succeed Mr. Raynor. They were determined, however, to find out the cause

of the unsatisfactory result from this department, and with this object they made the following regulations :—

" 1st. That all clogs and shoes be numbered and prices marked in plain figures ; the foreman to keep the number and price of each pair in a book provided for that purpose."

" 2nd. That all leather, nails and other goods, be weighed and counted when purchased, and entered in a book."

" 3rd. That the foreman weigh all leather and nails, when sent out to be made ; and enter the cost of each in a book with the maker's name attached thereto ; and when the work is brought back, the foreman to provide him with a ticket to be brought to the office for payment. All journeymen to be paid at the office."

" 4th. The foreman to send a correct return to the office each week, of all ready made shoes &c sold, with the number and cost price of each pair in one column and the retail price in the next column. The same to be done with all home made and mended work, with the maker's or mender's name attached."

" 5th. That a notice be printed and put up in the shops, that all articles in this shop are sold for ready money, and all articles marked with plain figures, from which no abatement can be made."

This looked liked getting to the bottom of the matter with a vengeance, and one cannot imagine a much more elaborate check on the business being arranged.

For a time the business seemed to settle down quietly, but it is very doubtful if the whole of the above instructions were adhered to for any length of time.

Mr. Guest, however, only retained the position of manager for about eighteen months, for on March 12th, 1866, he was succeeded by Mr. Wm. Bennett, at the same wages of 24s. per week.

The following interesting resolution was passed in March of this year, 1864 :—" That the sum of £2 - 2 - 0 be paid to the fund in opposition to the Toll bars."

An agitation was at this time taking place all over the country for the doing away with toll bars ; those,

however, in Leigh were not removed until 1867, or three years later.

With the continued growth of the society's business, there being now nine grocery branches, in addition to the corn mill, grocery warehouse, bakery, drapery, and clog and shoe departments, the committee began to realise that it was more than they could deal with at their weekly meetings, and they thereupon decided to divide themselves into sub-committees, the first arrangement of which was as follows:—

(1) *Corn Mill Committee.*—Messrs. Henry Brooks, Richard Burrows, Edward Ranicar and Thos. Thornley. They were "to look after the Corn Mill, Bakehouse, and Warehouse."

(2) *Cattle Committee.*—Messrs. Richard Battersby, Joseph Wyatt and Thomas Green. Their duties were "to look after the Cattle yard, unoccupied land, and outside affairs in Ellesmere-street."

(3) *Shop Committee.*—Messrs. Wm. Boydell, Henry Woodward, John Longton, and William Ratcliffe. They were "to look after the various shops and Branch shops of the society, and visit them as often as convenient."

This sub-committee was also to "have the privilege of buying goods occasionally, from other shops, to compare with the Society's goods."

In March of this year (1864) a deputation from Boothstown waited on the committee asking them to open a branch shop there.

The committee passed a vote of thanks to the deputation "for their efforts in furthering the interests of the Society."

After due inquiries at Boothstown, it was agreed to open a branch, and immediately sixty-one persons gave in their names as members. A small cottage shop in Chaddock-lane was taken in April, 1864, at a rental of £8 per annum from Mr. T. Yates. The business, however, quickly outgrew this establishment and larger premises had to be looked for. Eventually, in July, 1867, premises, including a shop, cottage and small

NEWTON BRANCH
(Commenced 1863).

BOOTHSTOWN BRANCH
(Commenced 1864).

bakery were purchased from Mr. James Parr for the sum of £450. The cottage has since been added to the shop, which is now a very convenient one for the business.

Mr. James Garnett was the first shopman at this branch, his wages being 17s. per week. Mr. John Wallis, who had been acting as treasurer for Astley Branch since it was opened five years before, was also entrusted with the same duty for the Boothstown Branch.

Mr. Garnett only remained as manager of the Boothstown Branch for eighteen months. Mr. James Grundy succeeding him in August, 1865. Mr. Grundy, however, remained in charge of the shop for the long period of twenty-five years, when he resigned his position after long and faithful service to the society.

The society had now two branches, which are nearly twelve miles apart, viz., those at Boothstown and Newton.

To show the watchful care of the committee, Mr. Garnett on his appointment, as in the case of all the other shopmen, had to find sureties, and he was required to satisfy the committee that one of the sureties was in possession of at least £100. At the same meeting it was resolved:—"That the Deeds, Bank books, and Bonds, of all the parties employed by the Society be laid before the Committee and that the Bonds of the Treasurer, Manager, and Secretary be deposited in a drawer in one of the safes, the Chairman to hold the key."

The fees paid to the committee at this time were—the president £2 per annum, and each member of the committee £1 per annum.

These were certainly not extravagant fees, considering that they met on an average from seventy to eighty nights in a year.

The committee were also liable to a fine of twopence should they fail to be present "at a quarter past the hour of meeting."

Mention has been made of a female being employed in the grocery shop at Bradshawgate, but this was eclipsed by a female baker, Mrs. Jane Morris, being

employed to assist her husband, John Morris, in the Bakery at Astley, at the salary of 5s. per week. Her services, however, were to be terminated in case "the baking should become reduced to 8 batches per week."

John Morris, the baker at Astley, was the first baker engaged by the society in 1858, at the shop in Bradshawgate.

Whether it was owing to the dryness of the flour he used in the bakery, or to some other cause, it was the unfortunate fact that Morris at times was troubled with a very overpowering thirst. It is told to the writer by an Astley member, who is still living, that on one occasion when "Old John," as he was called, had finished mixing and kneading his dough in the "Dashun" or trough, he was seized with a sudden attack of his complaint, and, with a view of getting relief, he left the bakery and went across the road to a *druggist's* shop. He was away so long that when the shopman went into the bakery the dough had risen so much that it was running over on to the floor, and the oven fires had gone out. The shopman called in a neighbour and, together, after a lot of trouble, they got the oven heated and the dough in the tins. The oven not being hot enough it naturally took a good deal longer than usual to bake the bread, and it was not before the bread was taken out that Morris returned, but quite too *ill* to do any work.

The members noticed the difference in the bread, which, strange to say, was better than usual, and they inquired if they had got a new baker. The shopman replied, "Yes, and he's a champion, too." Old John begged the shopman not to report the matter, and it never came to the knowledge of the committee, and is only told now for the first time over forty years after the event.

About this time a new telescope and microscope were purchased, and they were to be lent out to the members, the former at threepence and the latter at one halfpenny per day. The borrower to be responsible for all damages.

CHAPTER VIII.

1865.

Drapery and Boot and Shoe Club Formed; Refuse to Join the C.W.S.; The Policy of Isolation; The Reading-room and Library; The Old Mechanics' Institution Library.

"A great library contains the diary of the human race."

THE first notable event in 1865 was the formation of a drapery and boot and shoe club.

In March of this year the secretary's office, which up to this time had been in one of the rooms over the grocery shop in Bradshawgate, was removed to the new place provided between the corn mill and the grocery depôt in Ellesmere-street, which was a room about 15ft. square, the committee meetings being held in the room over.

With a view to encouraging the members to read the *Co-operator*, it was decided that 500 copies per month be purchased and sold at one halfpenny each.

It seems rather singular to notice that at this time the committee were not quite sure as to whether it was the duty of a butcher's apprentice to take out meat to customers, as witness the following resolutions :—

"(1) That in the opinion of this committee it is the duty of the apprentices to take out the Butcher's meat when ordered by the shopman."

"(2) That sixpence per week be paid to the apprentice who *willingly* takes out the Butcher's meat when ordered."

or, in other words, "willingly" does what he is compelled to do.

A rather startling resolution for the party concerned was—"That in case Thos. Horrocks shall apply for a weeks wages, the manager be authorised to give him into the hands of the Police,"
and following this—"That no wages be paid T. Horrocks unless the Society is obliged to do so."
There is, however, no clue to the offence he is supposed to have committed. Horrocks, it appears, was a baker at Golborne Branch.

In September of this year an instruction was given to the manager "to purchase goods from the Wholesale Co-operative Society."

On October 30th of this year Mr. George Midgley, the first assistant appointed for the secretary, was engaged at the wages of 4s. per week, and Mr. Midgley remained in the employ of the society until 1881.

A resolution is also passed—"That the Society take up about 1800 shares in the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Industrial and Provident Society Limited."

The committee, however, shortly afterwards decided "That no further steps towards taking up shares in the Wholesale Agency be taken until the question of exemption from stamp duty has been laid before a general meeting of the members, unless in the interim the question of exemption be settled to the satisfaction of the Committee."

The quarterly meeting confirmed this by a resolution—"That this meeting is of opinion that the Committee have acted wisely in delaying taking up shares in the Wholesale Agency."

One cannot quite understand why the question of stamp duty should be the deciding factor in a matter of policy of this kind.

It was not until twenty years later that the society

decided to take up shares with the Co-operative Wholesale Society.

For a long number of years our society seems to have adopted the fatal policy of keeping aloof from the leading co-operative institutions, forgetting that this banding together and helping one another was the very essence of co-operation, and applied equally to the different co-operative societies, as to the individual members of each. The writer, early in his career as secretary, remembers committee-men arguing that to spend a few shillings on sending delegates to conferences was a waste of money, one remarking that he "did not think they could teach us anything."

What pitfalls, that the society afterwards fell into, would have been avoided if this fatal policy of isolation had not been acted upon.

The Reading-room and Library.

Reference has already been made to the decision in 1858 to establish a reading-room, and to the kind of newspapers and magazines provided; also that the first reading-room was commenced in the premises in Sugar-street, and afterwards behind the old drapery premises in Bradshawgate.

In February, 1865, the reading-room and library were transferred to the front room over the new grocery shop at the corner of Albion-street; and in the month following, the middle room adjoining, which had previously been the secretary's office, was converted into the library room. Messrs. Richard Battersby and Thomas Brooks were appointed to superintend these rooms.

By this time a considerable number of books had been accumulated in the library, which was open one night each week.

About this time an interesting development of the library question in the town took place.

Sometime after the commencement of the society's business in 1857, most of the young men who had carried on the mutual improvement class, referred to

at the commencement of this history, were fully occupied with the society's affairs.

A few of the number, however, commenced to hold meetings in the "Christian Meeting Room," Back King-street, just behind the present Manchester and Liverpool District Bank, and kept up a series of what they described as "Penny Readings."

The principal workers in connection with this were James Abbott, Robert Leather and Wm. Shirley; and amongst those who took part in the readings were Thomas Smith (father of Alderman Smith, ex-Mayor of Leigh) and the Rev. Thomas Mills (Congregational minister).

A small charge was made to the public for admission to the readings and concerts, and with the money thus obtained they purchased the remains of the library of the old Mechanics' Institution. One of the conditions of the purchase, however, was that the public should have access to the books for a small fee.

Efforts were then put forth with a view of arranging for a public library. Seeing that the co-operative society had just installed their reading-room and library in new and convenient premises, an amalgamation was suggested.

The following letter appeared in the *Leigh Chronicle* of April 8th, 1865:—

"The Working Men's Library.

"Seeing that great efforts are being made to establish a working men's Library in this Town, and knowing what working men can do, when they set about it, through the success of the Co-operative Society, who are also forming a Library of their own; I think it would be a great and mutual help, if they could all agree to join in one body, and thus form one good Library for all. I think it would be a great means of removing the stigma, that rests on our town, that working men won't look after their own improvement and elevation;" and two weeks later the following appeared:—"We are glad to learn that a liberal disposition was shown at a meeting of members of the

co-operative society to meet the promoters of the working men's Library, and that it is probable that an arrangement will be made, that will be calculated to afford great educational advantages to all, and be mutually advantageous to both Societies."

The committee of the society were approached with a view to bringing this arrangement for an amalgamation of the two libraries about, and at a general meeting of the members held on July 10th, 1865, it was resolved—"That the working men's Library be amalgamated with the Reading-room and Library of the Society."

The arrangement made was that the general public, who were not members of the society, should have access to the library and reading-room on payment of a small fee, which was fixed at the nominal sum of 6d. per quarter.

Thus was established for the first time in Leigh a library and reading-room open entirely to the public.

During the negotiations for the transfer of the remains of the library from the Mechanics' Institution to the society's premises, Mr. Robert Leather acted as secretary for the joint committee which was formed to carry out the arrangements. Mr. James Abbott, whose name has already been referred to in connection with the "Penny Readings," acted as librarian for the first six months. The total amount of subscriptions received from non-members for the use of the rooms at sixpence per quarter for the first six months was £5. 9s. 7d.

There would probably be about two hundred books handed over from the Mechanics' Institution. Some of these, however, it was found were not in a fit condition for lending out, and others were of no value and were destroyed. The remainder of the books are still preserved in the library; some of these are interesting, as they bear the signatures of prominent local men.

An interesting incident in connection with the formation of the library is worth recording. At the time the transfer of the books from the Mechanics' Institution was being made, the late Dr. G. H. Evans made a present of an encyclopædia. He called with the books

at the office of Mr. Halliwell, the editor of the *Chronicle*. Now, it so happened that on this same day the results of the elections for the Pennington Local Board were announced, the doctor proving to be one of the unsuccessful candidates. He thereupon wrote on the front page of the first volume the following:— "Presented to the working men of Leigh in the fervent hope of adding some little to the intelligence they have this day shown. October 28th, 1865." The inscription is still very clear and well preserved.

On November 4th, 1865, the opening of the library was celebrated by a meeting and entertainment in the theatre. Dr. G. H. Evans presided, and Mr. Robert Leather, the secretary, gave an account of the steps taken during the formation of the library, and concluded by informing the meeting "that a union of the Co-operative and Mechanics' Institution Libraries on mutually advantageous terms had been arranged. Three rooms were being provided by the Society as News room, Library and chess rooms. The Library would be open on Friday evenings, and the public would have free access to all the advantages, for a small payment of sixpence per Quarter." He announced, in conclusion, "that Dr. Evans had given a new Encyclopedia worth £7 to the Library and trusted others would follow so noble an example." The Rev. Thos. Mills also gave an eloquent address.

The following regulations, passed in October, 1865, for the conducting of committee meetings, are worth recording:—

"1st. The business to commence punctually at the time stated in the rules and terminate not later than 10 o'clock.

"2nd. The ordinary business to be transacted in the order of the programme produced by the Secretary or President.

"3rd. The names of movers and seconders of motions to be entered in the minutes with the number of votes pro and con.

"4th. Any member having any business to bring

before the meeting, to do so upstanding, addressing himself to the Chairman, concluding his remarks with a motion on the subject (if any is required). If he concludes without a motion, the President to call for the next business.

"5th. All questions, remarks or statements, to be addressed to the President, the speaker to be upstanding, and speak once only on the question before the meeting, unless by permission of the President. Movers of motions to have the right to reply.

"6th. No speaker to be interrupted with any remarks of approbation or disapprobation while addressing the President on the subject before the meeting.

"7th. Movers of motions to supply copies in writing.

"8th. The President to have power to make a motion whenever he thinks it requisite.

"9th. That when the timepiece shall point to the hour of ten the President shall declare the meeting closed.

"10th. Anyone infringing these regulations to be fined one penny, to be applied as the committee may order."

These regulations are signed by the whole of the committee and secretary.

On the same date a resolution was passed—"That no bull be bought for the Society," and this instruction has been acted upon by the society's butchering department ever since. Mr. Bull has somehow got a bad reputation for himself, whether he be alive or dead.

At the end of 1865 the membership had increased to 1,812, and the share capital to £21,103. The average dividend paid during the year on the purchases from the shops was 1s. 4¾d., and for the corn mill 8¾d.

In April, 1866, the first female assistant for the drapery department was engaged. in the person of Ann Bolton, at the wages of 5s. per week.

Three small though interesting subscriptions are mentioned at this time, viz.: 10s. to the Leigh Fire Brigade, and 2s. 6d. towards painting and gilding the

church clock, and 2s. 6d. to the postman as a new year's gift; also a donation of £1 from the Library Fund to the Bedford Ragged School, which was held in a cottage near Green-lane end. Mr. M. Pownall was the superintendent, and the Misses Taylor, of Hall House, and Miss Pratt, of Bedford, were the teachers at this time.

During this year the society found themselves in difficulties in connection with a patent exhaust machine, which had been installed in the corn mill, apparently without having obtained the consent of the patentee, Mr. G. H. Bovril. Other millers throughout the country were similarly contesting the rights of the patentee, and the Millers' Association were acting in the matter for the mills concerned. After lengthy legal proceedings, which were carried to the House of Lords, the patentee obtained a verdict in his favour, and the society had to pay the sum of £268 for the infringement, being calculated on the total number of sacks which had been passed through the machine.

Mr. Thos. Ainscough
(General Committee, 22 years; Educational Committee, 4 years).

Tyldesley Branch
(Drapery and Butchering; commenced 1900).

Tyldesley Branch
(Grocery and Clog and Shoe; commenced 1866).

CHAPTER IX.

1866.

TYLDESLEY BRANCH; AN OLD TYLDESLEY SOCIETY; THE MILLER *versus* THE BAKER.

> "A friend should bear his friend's infirmities,
> But Brutus makes mine greater than they are."

THE next branch shop to be opened was the one at Tyldesley, and in view of the fact that another society has been established there in recent years, and that our society's right, from a co-operative point of view, to be at Tyldesley has been questioned by those who are not acquainted with the history of the matter, it will be well to enter somewhat fully into the matter.

The first co-operative society in Tyldesley was started in April, 1850, for we find the following advertisement in the *Leigh Chronicle* of April 9th, 1850:—"Tyldesley Commercial Co-operative Society, High Street, Tyldesley—The Committee have pleasure in announcing that the store of provisions and groceries will be opened on the 16th inst."

The society's name was afterwards changed to "Tyldesley Co-operative Industrial Society," and its rules were registered in this name under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act in 1859. The place of business being still in High-street.

The rules are signed by John Daniel, secretary, and Messrs. Edward Sandford, John Cross and David Croft, members.

In January, 1861, the society purchased a shop and three cottages in Shuttle-street, part of which property is now occupied by the Leigh Society's grocery and boot and shoe shops.

On August 17th, 1864, the following letter was addressed to the committee of the Leigh Society :—

"I am requested on the part of a General Meeting of our Society to solicit some information, as to the terms on which we could connect our Society with yours—supposing you have the least idea of such a connection.

"From want of good management, ours is on the point of breaking up. The members seem to have lost all confidence. We have 200 members, and at a General Meeting held on the 12th the desire was to go on, and not break up.

"I really cannot see how we must carry on except the Receipts are more than £40 per week, and the notices for withdrawals are not to be paid.

"The Management centred at Leigh would restore confidence, as your Society is in such a prosperous condition, and you going ahead. Then we should take flour from your Corn Mill and thereby helping your Mill to a greater success.

"It has been entirely our last shopman's fault that we have not made purchases of your flour.

"I cannot see why we should not take £100 per week at Tyldesley. If this cannot be tided over I am of opinion it will be a great blow to the spread of co-operation in this neighbourhood. The members have it all in their own hands, that is to make all their purchases at the store. They do not like the idea of giving up. I am sure confidence would be restored, could we join in with you on terms suitable to you. If you should have any idea of such a thing and can offer any suggestions you will oblige

"Yours truly

"John Hardman

Secretary."

A deputation from our society, consisting of the president, manager and two members of the committee, had an interview with the Tyldesley committee about a week later, and as the result of the interview the secretary was instructed to ask the Tyldesley Society "to inform them what sum they require, for their shop cottages and fixtures."

The negotiations, however, at this time fell through, for on September 14th the Tyldesley Society sent the following letter :—

"At a Special General Meeting of the members held at the Store yesterday, it was resolved that the Society should not be dissolved; and having obtained the means to continue it on a proper footing, we hope to surmount our present difficulties. We beg to thank you for your offer and for the trouble you have taken and remain yours &c the Committee.

"John Hardman, Sec."

The Tyldesley Society then apparently struggled on for another twelve months, and on October 9th, 1865, the following letter was received :—

"The Chairman of the Leigh Co-operative Society

"Sir,—This Society having determined to wind up voluntarily and it having been intimated to us that you might feel inclined to purchase the whole of our stock and property for the purpose of carrying it on as a Branch of your store. We beg to inform you that we are empowered to treat with you for them and shall be glad to entertain any proposition you may please to make with a view to taking the whole concern off our hands. We will meet your Committee, at Leigh, or here, if you will fix a time. We will take no further steps in the way of selling the property and fixed stock till we hear from you. A many of our members would join you here.

"R. Welch
"Charles Ely } Liquidators"
"George Hone

No steps seem to have been taken for a few months, but on February 26th, 1866, the following resolution appears on the minutes of the Leigh Society :—

"That Mr. Welch be informed that his offer of the property of the Tyldesley Society has been favourably received by the Committee and that as soon as the requisition in course of preparation, asking the Committee to open a Branch at Tyldesley has been received and approved of they will lose no time in coming to a final decision on the matter."

And a fortnight later the following appears :—

"That the report of the deputation to Tyldesley respecting the Tyldesley Store be approved of by this Committee and in the event of 60 persons paying the entrance fee and signing the declaration, this Committee recommend the purchase of the Tyldesley shops to the General Meeting."

More than the stipulated number of persons joined the Leigh Society as members, and the general meeting confirming the committee's recommendation, the property and fixtures were bought from the liquidators.

The rules of the old Tyldesley Society, with the Registrar's signed certificate attached, and also copies of the winding-up resolutions passed by the members, are still in the possession of the Leigh Society.

After this evidence of the fact that the Leigh Society became established in Tyldesley at the special invitation of the Tyldesley people, and bought up their premises and fixtures and stock after they had failed in their efforts to carry on co-operation, and that in addition to this, the Leigh Society have property there to the value of nearly £2,000—it will not again be contended that they are not fully entitled to be at Tyldesley.

It was very unfortunate that when the Leigh Society were struggling against tremendous difficulties, owing to the calamity in connection with the weaving depart-

ment, and just when they were in need of all the help that co-operators could give to them, that this was the time chosen to start an opposition society at Tyldesley.

As it is over twenty years since these events happened, a new generation of co-operators has arisen, most of whom would have no knowledge of what is now recorded.

The Leigh Society commenced business in May, 1866, in Shuttle-street, Tyldesley, in the premises bought from the defunct society. Mr. James Dickinson, who had been in charge of the Lowton Branch since 1860, was sent to take charge of the new shop, at the wages of 20s. per week. Robert Watson taking his place at Lowton. Mr. Dickinson occupied the cottage adjoining the shop at a rental of 2s. 6d. per week.

Mr. Dickinson, however, only remained in charge of the shop for about eighteen months, when his services were summarily dispensed with, for reasons which are not stated—whatever was the cause of his dismissal, he seemed to have had the sympathy of the members at Tyldesley, for a requisition was sent to the committee asking for a special meeting of the members. The committee, however, declined to entertain the request, and referred the requisitionists to the rule which empowered the committee to deal with matters relating to management.

The matter was, however, brought up at the next members' meeting, and a resolution was passed " that the Committee have discharged their duty in a proper manner in the case of James Dickinson the Tyldesley shopman."

Evidently anticipating a larger attendance of members than usual, the committee had engaged the Drill Hall for the general meeting.

Mr. Wm. Johnson succeeded Mr. Dickinson in the management of the shop.

In 1899 the society purchased two adjoining cottages, and two others in the rear of same. The two front cottages have been converted into drapery and butcher's shops, and the cottage first bought with the shop, into a boot and shoe shop. Notwithstanding the difficulties

and the opposition the society has had to contend against at Tyldesley, steady progress has been made all along.

The society has had a stalwart champion at Tyldesley in Mr. Thomas Ainscough, who has been a member of the society for thirty-six years, and has served on the general committee for a period of twenty-two years, and also for four years on the educational committee.

In this year (1866) the society had still a large amount of unemployed capital, and the committee began to turn their attention to the question of entering into the cotton manufacturing business. In a later chapter will be found a condensed account of the society's experiences in this direction.

During the summer of this year (1866) there appears to have been very frequent complaints about the quality of the bread.

The miller said it was the fault of the baker, and the baker said it was the fault of the miller, and between the two the committee were very much troubled. Resolutions were passed condemning first one and then the other.

One resolution of the committee states "that in the opinion of this Committee the irregularity of the flour is the cause of the bad bread, and that the miller be ordered to set it right at once."

A determined effort was, however, made to get to the bottom of the matter, and a special committee of five members was appointed to thoroughly investigate the matter, and the following is their report :—

"In accordance with a Resolution passed at the last General Meeting of members, we have made inquiries at all the bakehouses of the Society and examined all the servants of the Society that have to do with the making of Bread. We found the Bake-house in Ellesmere-street in a dirty slovenly state, particularly a Dashin or mixing trough which they (the Bakers) say is only used once or twice a week, and which smelled so sour that we recommended its removal at once. We think if you could induce Mr.

Hill (the Secretary) to superintend the baking Dept. with full power and control over it, and have all the Dashins or mixing troughs steamed and scalded, at least once a week, it would be a great improvement.

"With regard to the flour, the statements are so conflicting that we are not in a position to say much at present. The Bakers do not find any fault with it, but many of the customers do, but we hope ere long to be able to furnish you with a fuller report.

"Hoping you will give this your calm consideration and attention,

"We remain Your obedient servants

"Joseph Whyatt
"William Morris
"Thomas Green
"Roylance Hamlett
"Richard Battersby."

On this report it was clearly, in sporting terms, a drawn game between the miller and the baker.

As the "fuller report" promised is not recorded, it is to be presumed that an improvement took place.

The special committee were paid 15s. each for their services.

About this time it would appear that the committee were evidently showing signs of want of confidence in their own administrative ability, and at the same time of their unbounded confidence in the ability of the secretary, for we find the following striking resolution recorded :—

"That this meeting vests Wm. Hill the Secretary with authority to superintend the entire business of the Company at Leigh in the absence of the Manager, and also he in conjunction with the Manager to have unqualified authority to correct any and every irregularity without appeal to this Committee, during our term. They only to be amenable to the Committee."

On October 22nd, 1866, the committee took upon themselves to *elect* five members on the Pennington Local Board, for the resolution says—"That Mr. Wm. Boardman, Richd. Greenough, Adam Hindley, Joseph Limon and Rowland Hall be elected members of the Pennington Local Board." Of course what was meant was that they intended to vote for these gentlemen.

CHAPTER X.

1867-1869.

First Subscription to Congress; Curiosity in Cottage Building; First Separate Butcher's Shop; Table showing Progress for First Ten Years; Robert Leather, President; Adam Smith (First Manager) Retires; Wm. Dickinson appointed Manager; Valentine Farrington appointed Corn Mill Manager; Dividend at 4d. in the £; Special Valuation of Society's Properties.

"In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

AT the general meeting of members, held on January 14th, 1867, the following resolution was passed:—"That ¼d. per member be paid to the conference committee towards carrying out the objects of the meeting of the conference to be held on Good Friday, the 19th April next, and that the committee be recommended to send a deputy to that meeting." This was the first Annual Co-operative Congress at which our society was represented, and the first payment to the Co-operative Union.

A curiosity in the way of cottage building was decided upon by the committee, which was "that 5½ cottages be built on the vacant land at Newton." It does not state whether the half is to be measured vertically or

horizontally. One has sometimes heard of butchers killing half a cow, which might conceivably be useful, but cannot understand what use could be made of half a house.

Another resolution was—"That the committee approve of the midsummer holiday being held in Whitweek." With all their wisdom, however, the committee could not manage to control the seasons—they could not bring midsummer to Whitsuntide.

The society's butchering business had up to this time been carried on in connection with the grocery and provision shop, and there does not appear to have been any record kept as to what profit was made from the business. The requisite alterations were made in the unoccupied portion at the rear of the Bradshawgate premises, and a separate butcher's shop was made, with a frontage to Albion-street, and from this time the butchering business was kept as a separate department.

At the annual meeting on January 13th, 1868, the Rev. Thos. Mills was elected an arbitrator in place of John Fairclough, deceased.

A curious request seems to have been sent to the committee by one of the tenants at Newton, for a resolution states—"That it is inexpedient for the society to repair the looking glass damaged by the late storm in one of the Newton cottages."

There is also an interesting resolution at this time, inasmuch as it is one of the only two cases in the history of the society; it states—"That Thomas Smith's application to be admitted a member be rejected." Thos. Smith, whoever he was, had evidently done something which was considered to be detrimental to the society's interest.

At the end of 1867 the society had completed ten years of its existence, and the following table, showing the progress made in the ten years, was printed on the balance sheet :—

TABLE SHOWING THE PROGRESS OF THE SOCIETY.

Date.	Members.	Business.	Nett Profit.	Capital.
		£	£	£
1857....	78	94	10	119
1858....	280	6387	321	1289
1859....	557	11054	684	3830
1860....	739	18968	1045	6549
1861....	806	18552	961	7842
1862....	1005	21478	1372	10499
1863....	1357	24732	1720	15866
1864....	1664	32712	2287	22629
1865....	1812	37238	2474	24071
1866....	2028	43403	2936	27847
1867....	2205	52524	3325	31528

It should, however, be pointed out that during the years 1863-4-5-6 and 7 the corn mill business is included in the figures. They are shown separately in the statement at the end of the book.

During the four years of the working of the corn mill the total sales were £66,307. The net profit, after charging interest and depreciation, was £3,443, and the average dividend paid to the members 10d. in the £.

The society now possessed a corn mill, grocery warehouse, bakery, stables, drapery and boot and shoe shops, and eleven branch grocery shops. An investment of £854 in the Rochdale Co-operative Corn Mill Society, £8,801 in the bank, and an insurance and guarantee fund of £406.

The committee, in their report, state: "These results far exceed the expectations of the most sanguine of its early promoters, and must be highly encouraging to all the members and to all true friends of co-operation, pointing out as they do, most clearly, the still greater results which, under good management, may yet be achieved by working men working together in unity."

Amongst the names of members admitted during the year was that of Mr. Thomas Travers Hayes, jun.

Another addition was made in the female staff of employés, in the person of Mrs. Lane, who was appointed to assist in the bakery at Golborne at the wages of 5s. per week.

During this year the committee had under consideration the question of bringing the drapery business into the same block as the grocery at the corner of Albion-street, so as to form one central depôt and be more convenient for the members. The committee prepared a scheme and submitted it to a general meeting of members, who, however, decided against them, and passed the following resolution :—" That in the opinion of this meeting sufficient accommodation will not be given for the business of the drapery, grocery and butchering departments, by the proposed alterations of the Bradshawgate premises now recommended by the committee." This was carried by thirty votes to two.

In this year the first arrangement was made for all the branch shopmen to sign a form of bond or agreement, and they were permitted to pay weekly instalments to what was and is still called the Guarantee Fund. The amount of the bond was to be £50. Interest at the same rate as paid on shares was allowed on the amounts deposited, and the whole sum was withdrawable at once on a shopman leaving the society's employ, providing he had not in any material matter broken the terms of the bond.

In April of this year (1867) Mr. William Clarke was elected president, succeeding Mr. Henry Brooks, who had occupied the position for 2¼ years. Mr. Clarke was at one time collector of the gas accounts in Leigh. He, however, only retained the position of president for six months, when he resigned. Mr. Robert Leather was elected in his place, and he retained the position of president continuously until March, 1882.

In June, 1868, Mr. Adam Smith terminated his services as general manager. Mr. Smith was the first manager and had been with the society almost from

MR. HENRY BROOKS
(President, 1865 to 1867).

MR. WM. DICKINSON
General Manager, 1868 to 1889).

the commencement. He had had control of the buying for all departments—grocery, butchering, drapery, clog and shoe, and also for the corn mill, up to June, 1867. He had been sent to Ireland on two occasions to purchase butter and eggs, and his duties altogether had been of a very miscellaneous character. The members in those days were, if anything, even more exacting than they are to-day; he would have been an extraordinary man if he had always succeeded in avoiding severe and, at times, adverse criticism. Mr. Smith's appointment terminated rather suddenly, but it is not recorded what were the special reasons which brought about his severance from the society.

Mr. William Dickinson was appointed his successor. Mr. Dickinson was one of the founders of the society and the first manager of the Astley Branch; he had been a permanent branch manager since 1859. He continued to occupy the position of general manager for the long period of twenty-one years.

In September of this year (1868) Mr. William Hodson was first engaged as an assistant shopman in Bedford Branch at 16s. per week, and he is still in charge of a shop after thirty-nine years' service.

At this time the committee again reaffirmed their adherence to ready-money trading, by the following resolution :—" That positive orders be given to all our shopmen that in future they are not to sell any goods on credit, and any shopman neglecting this order will be at once discharged." It would appear from this that some of the shopmen had not been adhering strictly to the oft-repeated instruction in this matter.

As a means of keeping in check the ever growing share capital, or, at any rate, such as was invested by members with the sole object of getting the 5 per cent interest, without in any way assisting to produce the interest by supporting the shops, the following resolution was passed in January, 1869 :—" That the secretary be instructed to invite those members to withdraw, who reside out of the district, having £200 in the society and are doing no business with it ; " and on the same date the following :—" That the secretary

be instructed to receive not more than £100 from any future member."

The carter of sacks to the Westleigh Branch, it would appear, had been shirking his work, for a resolution states—"That the next sack goods sent from the mill to Westleigh shop be carried up the stairs by the carter." No wonder that the carter did not like the work; it is no plaything to carry a 12 score sack on the level floor, to say nothing of carrying it up stairs. This work is managed much better nowadays, for every shop is supplied with a patent gib crane, which can be easily worked by a lad.

Up to this time the management of the corn mill department had been a divided responsibility. Mr. John Pritchard, who was engaged in 1862 on the commencement of the mill, had been in the capacity of inside or working manager, the buying of the grain and the selling of the flour being done by the general manager, Mr. Adam Smith. The wonder is that, with this divided responsibility, the mill had done so well for seven years. Mr. Wm. Dickinson had occupied Mr. Smith's place for three quarters with equally satisfactory results, when, as it is stated in the committee's report, owing to considerable "depression in the flour trade," the result was not satisfactory; and for three succeeding quarters no dividend was paid from this department.

It would appear that the committee attached some blame to Mr. Pritchard, for he was requested to resign his position of manager on April 5th, 1869, and a resolution of confidence in Mr. Dickinson was passed. The committee, however, came to the natural conclusion that if the corn mill manager was to be held responsible for the results from the mill, he should have full control of the selecting and the purchasing of the grain from which he had to manufacture the flour, and they thereupon resolved—"That the corn mill and the grocery and branch department be under the management of two persons."

Mr. Valentine Farrington was engaged as manager of the corn mill at the wages of £2. 5s. per week, and his duties were defined as follows:—

Mr. Wm. Hodson
(from 1868).

Mr. John Battersby
(from 1869).

Mr. Edward Fazakerley
(from 1873).

Three Old Servants (still in Society's employ).

"1st. To have the entire management of the corn mill and the men employed therein.

"2nd. To purchase all grain required for the mill; see to the best method of manufacturing it into flour, meal, &c., and fix the wholesale prices of the same.

"3rd. To see that all goods bought come to hand right in quantity and quality.

"4th. To set apart a certain time for soliciting orders for goods and collecting the accounts for the same.

"5th. To consult the committee before making any large or speculative purchases of grain.

"6th. To purchase no kind of damaged grain unless under an order previously given by the committee."

Mr. John Battersby, who has for some years been managing the Tyldesley Branch, was in June of this year (1869) engaged as an apprentice, so that he has now been in the society's service for thirty-eight years.

Mr. William Drew and Mr. John Grundy were both during this year "declared off the committee for non-attendance."

The first two quarters of this year saw the society at its very lowest point in respect of the rate of dividend paid to the members, viz., for the March quarter 10d. and the June quarter only 4d. in the £. The chief cause of this state of affairs seems to have been the adverse results from the corn mill just referred to, and a general depression in trade which caused a considerable falling off in the sales at the shops. The general trade of the country, however, at this time was in a very depressed state.

The balance sheet for June, 1869, contains for the first time a statement showing the result of each branch shop separately, with the gross profit, working expenses, and net profit for each in separate columns; from this it is seen that three of the departments, instead of contributing to the dividend, were a serious drawback upon it. The butchering department shows a loss of 7½d. in the £, and the drapery and clog and shoe each a loss of 1½d. in the £.

The society, however, quickly recovered, for before the end of the year the dividend had risen to 1s. 6d. in the £, which was the highest rate paid for three years previously.

One of the methods adopted with a view of bringing about an improvement is indicated in the following resolution relating to the drapery department :—" That John Smith be instructed to puff the goods in his shop to the best of his ability by advertisements in the *Chronicle* for the next three months." The result was a large-typed advertisement in the *Chronicle*, which was continued for some months.

Mr. Smith's " puffing " was evidently not very successful, for a few weeks later a " puff " came from the committee to the following effect :—" That John Smith be requested to resign his situation."

Mr. Joseph Birchall followed Mr. Smith as manager of this department at the wages of 18s. per week.

In August of this year Mr. John Delves, who had been in charge of the butchering department for a number of years, resigned his position, and Mr. Alfred White took his place at the wages of 25s. per week. Mr. White's management was not a success, and he only retained the position for about twelve months. The business was then altogether suspended for some weeks. In October, however, the committee decided to try again, and Mr. Daniel Kay was thereupon engaged to try his hand at the wages of 26s. per week.

With the view of allaying the anxiety which appeared at this time to be widely spread amongst the members as to the financial soundness of the society, arising, no doubt, from the unusually low rate of the dividends, it was decided to have a special valuation of the society's properties ; for this purpose Messrs. Joseph Limon and Thos. Hardman were engaged " to examine the property of the society and supply the committee with a statement of its present value."

A few months later the committee report " that they have employed competent persons to make a valuation of the property of the society, and have great pleasure in stating that the total value of the property, shown

by such valuation, exceeds the nominal value previously given in the reports."

Although our members had declined to join the Co-operative Wholesale Society, the Wholesale Society was actually admitted a member of our society on November 29th, 1869. They were at this time patronising our corn mill and naturally wished to participate in the dividend.

CHAPTER XI.

1870–1876.

Accident to Van Driver; Dr. Evans' Time Signal; First Reserve Fund; Another Change in Corn Mill Management; Special Audit by P. and J. Kevan; Troublesome Shops; New Branch at Firs-lane; Tailoring Business Commenced; Roasting of the Tailor's Goose; Land and Building Rules; Discharge of the Butcher's Dog.

Still Forging Ahead.

ON the second of January, 1870, a very serious accident happened to Peter Fazakerly, the driver of the bread van. It appears he was returning from Westleigh Branch, and on arriving at the railway crossing at "Bens Brow" and finding the gates open, he proceeded to cross the line. The horse had just got across the line when an engine came along at a high speed and caught the van, tore it away from the horse and smashed it almost to atoms. Both horse and driver, as might be expected, were seriously injured. £40 was claimed as compensation for the van, and £30 for the horse. The driver Fazakerly had a miraculous escape; strange to say none of his limbs were broken; he was, however, very badly shaken and unable to work for several months.

At this time Mr. T. T. Hayes, J.P., was elected an arbitrator in place of Mr. D. Green, deceased.

As a contrast between the wages paid to carters to-day and in 1870, it may be mentioned that James Gerrard was engaged at 18s. per week, which is about 8s. below the present wages paid.

An interesting record also is the one—"That the privilege of attaching a telegraphic communication from the Post Office to the Whistle on the Corn Mill boiler be allowed to Dr. Evans."

This was in all probability the commencement of Dr. Evans' efforts to get a correct time signal for the town. Later on, as is well known, he commenced the firing of a rocket at 10 o'clock at his own residence, which was so arranged that the rocket would go off automatically, whether he was in attendance or not. He also obtained for the society a first-class clock to be kept in the engine house, and attended to it once at least every week, and recorded the seconds or fractions of seconds in its variations from the true time, which he himself took from the stars.

A curious resolution, which one is at a loss to understand, is the following:—"That the application of Samuel Hall to allow his lodger to sell beef and mutton in the Bakehouse at Boothstown be agreed to, and that the Manager inform him that any alteration he may make, be made good in case of leaving."

It may be as well to explain that the resolution passed by the committee in April, 1870, "That Tommy be sold" did not refer to the new junior clerk in the office, although that was the name he was at that time known by. The said junior clerk had only been working for about three weeks at 4s. per week, so could not well have been a very valuable or saleable asset to the society. He has, however, continued to be employed by the society to the present day. The said "Tommy" was one of the society's horses, who was just finishing a long career of useful service for the society.

A very practical resolution was—"That this Board at its rising adjourns to the back yard, to examine as to the practicability of erecting a chimney for the Bakehouse."

An effort was made at this time to get fresh premises

for the drapery and clog and shoe business, negotiations being opened for a drapery shop in Market-street, but nothing came of it.

In September of this year the first attempt at building up a reserve fund was made, and on several occasions as much as £900 was accumulated; it was, however, used as a dividend reserve fund and was constantly drawn upon for this purpose. It was not until 1889 or nineteen years later that a real reserve fund was commenced.

In February, 1871, the society was approached with a view of opening a branch shop at Walkden. It was, however, considered by the committee to be too far away from the depôt at Leigh.

The Walkden people soon after took up the matter themselves and commenced a society of their own in the same year.

On February 27th the sum of £2. 15s. was collected in the weaving shed towards the relief of the "French sufferers in the war." The committee made up the amount to £5, which was sent to the "*Daily News* French Relief Fund."

On March 20th Mr. Henry Naylor was engaged as assistant in the drapery department at 5s. per week. Mr. Naylor is still with the society, and has thus been in their employ thirty-six years.

The quarterly meeting, on April 10th of this year, was held in the room over the "Bird-i'th'-Hand" Inn, at the corner of Bradshawgate and Brown-street.

Another interesting event is recorded on June 5th, as follows:—"That the Waggons and Horses of the Society be let to Mrs. Battersby for the conveyance of the school trips to Hindley, for Southport."

The services of Mr. Valentine Farrington, who had been manager of the corn mill for three years were, for some reason not stated, summarily dispensed with, and Mr. John Fothergill took his place on April 3rd, 1872, at the wages of 40s. per week. Mr. Fothergill had for some time been in the employ of the Rochdale Corn Mill Society.

Mr. Fothergill only remained for eighteen months.

During the last three months of his management there was a loss on the corn mill business of £497. Mr. Fothergill had been speculating heavily in grain for the mill—so much had he bought, that several thousand sacks had to be stored for several months in the railway warehouses. A large quantity, through being in a bad condition when bought, and having to lie in the sacks for too long a time, was completely unfit for manufacturing into flour; and at the following stock-taking the result showed a further loss of £1,711, which, with the £497 loss on the previous quarter, made a total of £2,208.

The sum of £1,089 was taken from the profits of the shops department towards clearing off this loss, and the remainder was kept as a suspense account, and took two years of the corn mill profits to clear it off. During these two years of course there was no dividend paid for the corn mill department.

Mr. Thos. Simpson succeeded Mr. Fothergill in the management of the mill in October, 1874.

The losses in the corn mill department had evidently created a good deal of uneasiness in the minds of both the committee and the members, and it was wisely resolved to call in professional accountants to report on the financial position.

Messrs. P. and J. Kevan, chartered accountants, of Bolton, were engaged.

The following is Messrs. Kevan's report :—

"AUDITORS REPORT.

"Gentlemen,

"In accordance with your instructions, we have examined the Accounts of your Society, as made out for the quarter ending December 20th, 1872; March 20th, June 20th, and September 20th, 1873, and beg to report to you as follows :—

"These Accounts are prepared solely from the Cash Book, which we have carefully checked with the Invoices and with the Vouchers, the Ledgers and other books being comparatively of little use. Vouchers have been produced for all payments except on account "Butcher-

ing," which includes cattle purchased at the market by the manager of that department, the Invoices for the same being made out by him and passed by your Secretary.

"We have also had produced to us the Bank Pass Book, which we have examined with the Books of the Society, and find them to be correct.

"The Assets and Liabilities of the Society, on the 20th September, 1873, were :—

"ASSETS.	£	s.	d.
Cash at Bankers'	7,638	1	0
Cash in hand	533	13	8½
Investments — Manufacturing Department	16,000	0	0
Do. Brickmaking	371	6	4
Trade Cheques purchased	36	2	0
Fixed Stock Account, viz. :—			
Buildings 9,673 11 2			
Machinery 2,596 10 6			
Utensils 1,102 3 6			
	13,372	5	2
Accounts owing to Society	4,799	15	11
Stock-in-Trade	13,866	7	11
	£56,617	12	0½

"LIABILITIES.	£	s.	d.			
Members' Claims	50,108	13	10			
Contributions	4,193	1	8			
Guarantee Fund	202	3	9			
Reserve Fund	100	0	0			
Accounts owing by Society	108	3	0			
				54,712	2	3
Balance Profit				1,905	9	9½
				£56,617	12	0½

Leaving a balance of profit of £1,905 9s. 9½d., for the quarter ending September 20, 1873, apportioned in

payment of the usual depreciation of Fixed Stock, interest on Members' Shares, and a Dividend of 1s. 6d. in the pound on Members' purchases, carrying forward a balance of £34 18s. 3½d. to next account. No amount has been set aside this quarter to the Reserve Fund, though the accounts mentioned as owing to the Society (£4,799 15s. 11d.) contain some £500 doubtful debts. The balance of the Reserve Fund at September last was only £100.

"The loss on the Corn Mill Trade Account for the said quarter was £281. 6s. 7½d., and though not very clear (being extracted from the General Account, which shows a profit of £1,905 9s. 9½d.), appears to have arisen from the variation in the prices of the corn and flour.

"We think these Accounts should be kept separately, like the manufacturing.

"We consider the Accounts are carefully kept, the quarterly statements prepared with some trouble, but the system of bookkeeping might, we think, be much improved and simplified.

"Your obedient servants,

"P. & J. KEVAN."

It is evident from the above report, that at this time, notwithstanding the corn mill losses, the society was in a sound position and able to pay a dividend of 1s. 6d. in the £, in addition to clearing off £1,089 of the corn mill losses.

If only the committee had retained the services of Messrs. Kevan or some other chartered accountant, from this time forward, instead of relying an amateur auditors, it is absolutely certain that the society would have avoided the dire calamity which occurred in connection with the weaving department eight years later.

The following interesting resolution was passed on January 26th, 1874:—"That the Secretary be instructed to vote on behalf of the Society, in favour of the Leigh gas works being purchased by the Local

Boards of the District." The gas works were shortly afterwards purchased for the sum of £47,000.

In this year the attendances of the committee began to be entered for the first time on the balance sheet.

The society's departments which gave most trouble, so far as the shops were concerned, were the drapery, boot and shoe and butchering departments, and frequent changes of managers took place. The success of these departments was more dependent on the ability of the individual managers than perhaps was the case in the grocery. On several occasions the committee were on the point of giving up these departments owing to the unsatisfactory results. In the case of the grocery shops the stocks were renewed almost weekly, but in the other departments, particularly the drapery, considerable stocks had to be kept, and the various season's trades provided for. Hence, without very great care in the buying, large stocks accumulated, which got out of fashion, and were consequently much depreciated in value.

For the quarter ending March, 1874, the result in the drapery department was a loss of 8d. in the £, and for the following quarter the result was so unsatisfactory that the committee refrained from publishing it on the balance sheet.

Mr. Joseph Birchall, who had been in charge of the drapery department for about 4½ years, was succeeded in May, 1874, by Mr. J. Salkeld.

The committee, in their determination to get a thoroughly competent man, raised the wages from 22s. 6d. to 40s. Mr. Salkeld was instructed to "keep his stock at a sum not exceeding £1,500." A very adequate amount one would think for the small shop then occupied.

In January, 1874, a new branch shop was opened at Firs-lane, on land leased from the Vicar of Leigh. A shop and two cottages were first erected, fronting the highway; and twelve months later seven other cottages were erected in the side street afterwards called Co-operative-street.

As the share capital continued to increase, and as

WESTLEIGH BRANCH
(Commenced 1863).

FIRS LANE BRANCH
(Commenced 1874).

at this time the society had about £15,000 lying idle in the bank, and there being no other branch of business which the committee could see their way to embark upon, they were compelled to adopt other measures for its reduction.

In August, 1874, they came to the following conclusions :—

"1st. That the following Draft Circular be sent to non-trading shareholders—

> 'Sir—I am directed by the committee to remind you that all shareholders are expected to make their purchases at the Society's stores, and to inform you that as you do not comply with this requirement, you will oblige by giving notice for the withdrawal of your shares at your earliest convenience.
>
> 'By order of the Committee,
>
> 'Wm. Hill, Secretary.'

"2nd. That the 13 highest non-trading shareholders have a circular sent them at once.

"3rd. That members be admitted only as traders in future.

"4th. That the wives of shareholders be not admitted as shareholders in future.

"5th. That a modified circular be sent to all non-trading members, soliciting their trade."

These resolutions, however, did not bring about the desired result, for two years later the amount in the bank had increased to £17,459.

On February 11th, 1876, the following amendment of rules was registered :—"That all shareholders be required to purchase goods and bring in the checks, amounting at least to two pounds per Quarter, or eight pounds per annum, or in default their account shall be reduced to five one pound shares."

This brought to the scratch all those who had invested money simply for the purpose of the 5 per cent

interest, and who were not in any real sense co-operators. The result was that about £10,000 was withdrawn, which relieved the expenses very considerably.

It was further decided "that the shares held by the highest shareholders be reduced to £150 each, in accordance with Rule 29, and that the Interest cease on and after the 20th November next on all share accounts exceeding £150."

And again in January, 1877, it was decided to reduce the amount of shares to be held by one member to £100.

This restriction, however, of the amount to be allowed to be invested by each member was removed three years later, and extended again to the full limit of £200.

In January, 1875, it was decided by the general meeting to give a donation of £3. 3s. to the Manchester Infirmary. This was the first donation given by the society to an infirmary, and the same subscription has been repeated ever since. The first recommend was given to Mrs. Sefton in November, 1876.

In November, 1877, the first donation of £3. 3s. was given to the Manchester Eye Hospital, the daughter of Mr. Geo. Clegg receiving the first recommend.

A contract for the erection of eight cottages in Cawdor-street was let to Mr. Joseph Limon on May 24th of this year, but they were not tenanted until the end of the following year.

At the general meeting on July 12th, 1875, the committee were empowered to commence the tailoring business. This business was for some years carried on in the same premises as the drapery department. Mr. Henry Metcalf was the first manager of the tailoring department. He was engaged on August 11th, at the salary of 32s. per week. For the first six months the business was merged in that of the drapery department, but in January, 1876, a separate account was kept and the results shown separately on the balance sheet.

On October 25th the committee decided—"That an oven be fitted up at the Drapery shop for the purpose of *roasting* the Tailor's goose."

Mr. Metcalf remained as manager of this department until May, 1880, when he was succeeded by Mr. John Ord.

The Bedford Branch, which had been carried on in a shop in Brunswick-street which had been taken on rental, in 1860, was now found to be unsuitable for the large business carried on in it. A freehold plot of land in Chapel-street, immediately opposite the entrance gates to St. Joseph's Church, was purchased, and a large and commodious shop was erected. Some years later a portion of the grocery shop was divided off and made into a butcher's shop.

In September, 1875, the committee began to direct attention to the question of providing facilities for the members to become the owners of their own dwelling-houses.

It was first decided to give the members the opportunity of purchasing those cottages which had been previously erected or purchased by the society, from time to time. Nothing, however, was done in this direction.

Deputations were sent to the Bolton Society to make inquiries as to what they were doing in the matter; eventually it was decided to adopt a code of rules, same as used by Bolton, with some slight alterations. These rules had been prepared three years previously by Mr. J. M. Ludlow, who was then the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies.

The new land, building and mortgage rules, as they were called, were registered on June 17th, 1876.

The opportunities offered to the members under the new rules were only taken advantage of to a very limited extent; the total sum advanced at that time being £2,150 divided amongst eight members.

About this time there was an agitation in the town with a view to getting the London and North-Western Railway Co. to change the name of the station.

When the station was first opened, it was called by the absurd name of "Bedford Leigh."

Those who desired the name to be changed to "Leigh," and they were the great majority of the inhabitants, pointed out that the town of Leigh had a history of between six or seven hundred years, and that it was fast losing its name throughout the country owing to

the name of the station. A few of the leading residents at the Bedford end of the town proved themselves to be very unpatriotic, and even selfish on the question.

A public meeting decided by a large majority to ask for the station to be named "Leigh." The railway company, however, no doubt owing to the influence of the firm of Picksley, Sims and Co., who were very large customers to the company, decided on a kind of compromise, and altered the name to the equally absurd one of "Leigh and Bedford."

Our committee passed the following resolution on June 12th, 1876 :—"That this meeting is in favour of the Local Board memorial to the L. & N.-W. Ry. Co. for the change of the name of 'Bedford Leigh' to that of 'Leigh.'"

At this time the butchering department was again causing a good deal of anxiety to the committee, and it would appear that this time they were determined to make a clean sweep, for not only did they give the manager, Mr. Daniel Kaye, two weeks' notice to leave, but they even went so far as to pass the following resolution on April 24th, 1876 :—That the Butcher's dog be discharged."

This was the unkindest cut of all, for this dog, a large brown retriever named "Bob," had been a great favourite for a number of years, and had been in the habit of carrying a basket containing the customers' orders. It cannot be that the committee wished to curtail expenses, as the dog's services had always been given gratuitously ; and there is no suggestion that he had been reducing the profits by any undue feasting at the expense of the society.

The committee shortly afterwards expressed their objection "to Bob being re-engaged as assistant Butcher." So that it is evident he must have committed some serious offence, although there is no record that he was heard in self defence.

Mr. Wm. Henry James succeeded Mr. D. Kaye as butchering manager. Mr. James, however, only kept the position for three months when he was summarily paid off.

Mr. Peter Edge took his place, and kept it for only four months, when the committee again sent for Mr. Kaye on December 11th, 1876, and re-engaged him. At the same time Mr. James Bardsley was engaged as assistant at 10s. per week, and he has remained with the society ever since.

With the view of exercising some check on the business, the general manager, Mr. Wm. Dickinson, was instructed to "see the cattle alive, killed and weighed."

In July of this year inquiries were made with the view of opening the first branch drapery shop at Tyldesley, but the idea was given up at the time, and it was not until 1885 that the shop was opened.

CHAPTER XII.

1877-1881.

Distress in Silk Trade; Branches Opened at Hindley Green and Leigh-road; Astley Beerhouse Leased to a Brewery; Censure on Corn Mill Manager; J. Wyatt appointed Mill Manager; Bonus to Shopmen; Business Falling Off.

The calm before the storm.

DURING the year 1877 there was great depression in the silk trade. On March 27th a public meeting was held in the society's reading-room, Bradshawgate, "to consider the distressed state of the silk operatives, and to devise means for their relief." A committee was formed, consisting of Messrs. James Shuttleworth, chairman; Wm. Dickinson, treasurer; Thos. Norbury, secretary; William Norbury, assistant secretary; James Lees, William Boydell, Henry Brooks, William Ratcliffe, Amos Kniveton, Giles Watmough, Thos. Isherwood, John Battersby, William Baxter, John Ratcliffe and John Bell.

At a meeting a fortnight later the following gentlemen were added to the committee:—The Revs. J. H. Stanning, L. H. Ransome, F. Coleby, J. W. Milner, Moorhouse James, J. B. Phillips, T. Wood, C. W. L. Christien, J. Hancock, D. Wareing, Father Butler, Father Daly, Father Brindle, J. W. S. Simpson, Thos. Kirkman, R. Smith, S. J. Butcher, A. McPhee, Geo. Feather; Messrs. R. Whitfield, Jones, Isaac Standing,

HINDLEY GREEN BRANCH
(Commenced 1878).

LEIGH ROAD BRANCH
(Commenced 1879).

Richard Prescott, Roylance Hamlett, Peter Ward, Henry Penkethman, James Gregory, Richard Aldred, William Hill, Jos. Hill, Wm. Reddish, Thomas Youd.

The town was mapped out into ten districts, and two members of the committee appointed to each as canvassers for subscriptions.

The total amount received in subscriptions, including £100 from our society, was £728, and the granting of relief continued for a period of about twelve months.

At the final meeting of the committee the following resolution was passed :—" That the best thanks of this meeting be tendered to the Leigh Co-operative Society for the free use of their rooms for meeting purposes, and for their sympathy and willing co-operation generally."

At the beginning of 1876 a requisition was sent to the committee asking for a branch shop to be opened at Hindley Green. A meeting of the residents was called, at which representatives from the committee attended. To ensure a good attendance at the meeting, the services of the " Bellman " were requisitioned, and the sum of 4s. 3d. was paid to himself and a boy for their services.

At the general meeting held on April 10th the members decided " that a branch be opened at Hindley Green and a new shop built for the purpose." A suitable plot of land, owned by Mr. Richard Baldwin, was leased, and Mr. Thos. Peters was engaged to prepare plans for the erection of a shop and five cottages. The contract was let to Mr. J. Lomax, and the premises were completed and the shop opened for business about February, 1878, Mr. Joseph Hargreaves being the first manager of the branch. To further stimulate the business at the new branch, the committee had 300 handbills and 150 balance sheets circulated in the neighbourhood.

As has been previously mentioned, the society were the owners of a small beerhouse at Astley, which was purchased in 1873. The committee now decided to ask for tenders from brewery companies for the leasing of the house, and eventually the tender of the " Bedford

Brewing and Malting Company" was accepted for a term of twenty-one years.

On May 13th, 1878, a very strong condemnatory resolution was passed on the corn mill manager, which was as follows :—" That it is the unanimous opinion of this meeting that Mr. Simpson has bought bad grain, and knowingly received it, and ground it into flour. That all bad grain in the mill be returned at once, as far as practicable ; and that he pledge himself to the Board to produce good flour in future."

On March 10th, 1879, owing to the death of Mr. R. Devereux, who had been manager of the clog and shoe department since 1872, Mr. Simeon Lawton was appointed his successor. Mr. Lawton, however, only kept the position for about six months, when he was succeeded by Mr. Chas. Donnelly, who had been one of the employés in the department for a long number of years, and who was one of the very early members of the society.

About the middle of April of this year, the branch shop in Kirkhall-lane (now Leigh-road) was opened. Twelve months previously the committee had purchased four houses and a plot of vacant land from Mr. Wm. Green, and a contract was let to Mr. Wm. Wilkinson for the erection of a shop and one cottage in Kirkhall-lane, and three other cottages in the side street; Mr. Thomas Peters being the architect. Mr. Wm. Foulkes, who had been an assistant in Bedford Branch nearly two years, was appointed first shopman of this branch.

In April, 1879, on the death of Mr. Thos. Simpson, who had been manager of the corn mill for a period of nearly six years, Mr. Joseph Wyatt was appointed to succeed him as manager. Mr. Wyatt had been in the employ of the society since December, 1867, having served his apprenticeship in the corn mill, and for some years had been in the position of inside foreman. The purchasing of the grain was still left in the hands of Mr. Dickinson, the general manager.

At the beginning of 1880 considerable trouble was experienced in connection with the metallic checks

used for dividend purposes. There were no means under this system of insisting on all checks received on making purchases at the shops being presented for dividend out of the profits made during the same quarter. The result was that, to some extent, members speculated on the probable dividends, and withheld the checks when they anticipated a lower rate than usual. It was also discovered that someone had been manufacturing checks and obtaining dividend for them. The delinquent was discovered in the person of one of the butcher's assistants, who had been in league with others, who were the real makers of the checks. The evidence, however, was not sufficiently clear to warrant a prosecution, but the butcher was discharged from the society's employ.

An elaborate system of counting out the supplies of checks for each shop was put in force; the paper counterfoil check system was also put in force at the Bradshawgate grocery and butcher's shops. These paper checks had to be exchanged for metallic ones, one man only in the shop having charge of these. This counterfoil check system only remained in use about eight months. As a substitute, and as a check on the shopmen, the leakage system already in use was more strictly carried out, and each shopman was asked to sign a bond rendering himself liable for all leakage over a fixed amount. The latter, however, was never put in force. It was not until nearly ten years later that the system of using gum sheets, now in use, was commenced.

The commencement of the system of paying a bonus to shopmen was made in June of this year. The arrangement was—"That a Bonus of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ on all profits over 2/- in the £ be given to those shopmen whose dividend amounts to over 2/- in the £."

With the view of relieving the general manager, Mr. Dickinson, who was now doing the extra work of buying for the corn mill department, Mr. John Prescott was engaged to assist him on December 20th, 1880. His duties were principally the visiting of the branch shops and reporting to the general manager and collecting the

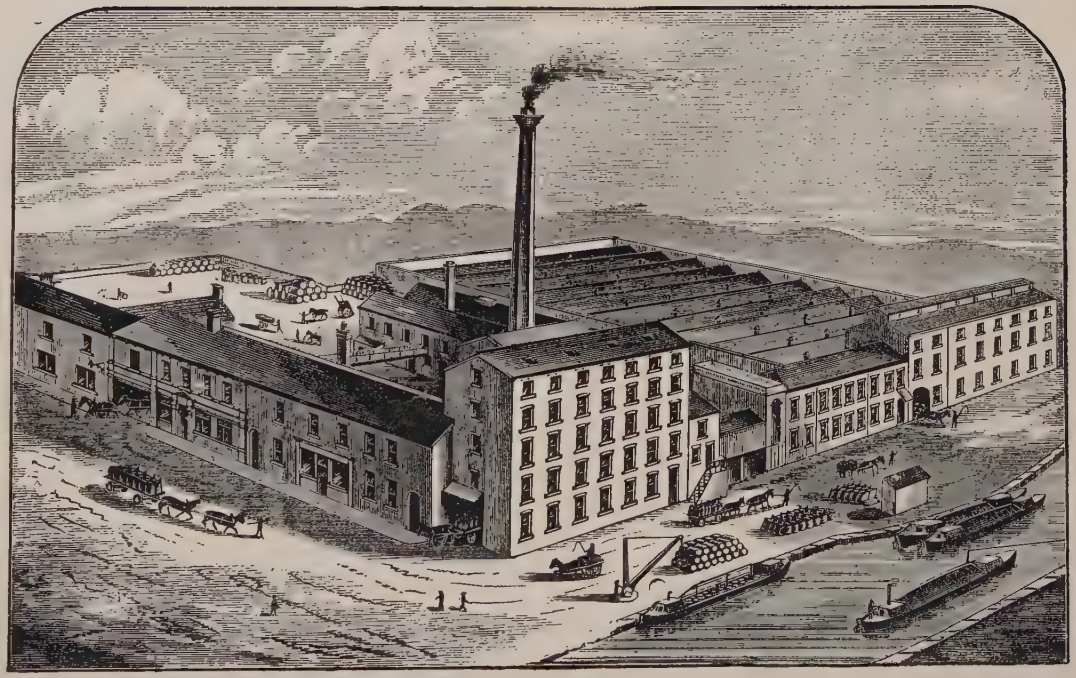
cash. On Mr. Prescott's appointment the services of the branch treasurers, as they were called, were dispensed with.

About this time, also, an attempt was made to take up the pork butchering business. Sausage and meat chopping machines were purchased, and a competent man engaged in the person of Mr. George Henshaw. The business, however, was only taken up in a half-hearted way, and lasted only about two years.

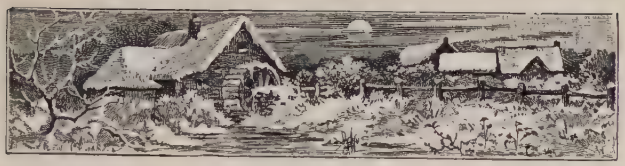
Continuing the policy of isolation previously referred to, the committee, on April 4th, 1881, declined the invitation to send a representative to a meeting of the Bolton District Association.

On April 25th, 1881, the following resolution was passed by the committee :—" That all the old *trossil* lying at the Branch shops be collected and brought to the Depôt without delay." " Trossil " is an old Lancashire word, seldom heard in these days, and means refuse, lumber, or things cast aside as useless.

During the years 1879, 1880 and 1881 there was a gradual falling off both in the number of members and in the business done at the shops, and, correspondingly, a reduction in the rate of dividend paid to the members. Between December, 1878, and June, 1881, the number of members was reduced from 3,558 to 3,288, and the sales per quarter from £20,163 to £18,077, and the share capital from £67,291 to £65,137. This falling off was no doubt due to the adverse results which were beginning to be shown on the balance sheet for the weaving department, and indicated a spirit of uneasiness springing up amongst the members, which culminated in the disaster which overtook the society at the end of the year, and which is briefly described in the next chapter.



Corn Mill, Depot and Weaving Shed, 1881.



CHAPTER XIII.

1866-1881.

THE WEAVING DEPARTMENT.

A Great Adventure and a Great Catastrophe.

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,
Gang aft agley,
And leave us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy."

FIRED by the success of their venture with the corn mill, and the fact that everything they had so far undertaken had been prosperous, even beyond their imaginations, the committee now began to direct their attention to the question of entering into the manufacturing business.

In the case of the corn mill, they commenced without having sufficient available capital, but in this case they had the excuse of having nearly £9,000 lying idle in the bank; and as they were paying 5 per cent interest to the members, and receiving at that time only about 1½ per cent from the bank, the difference was a serious drag on the profits, and it became necessary either to embark on some other development in business or to ask the members to take back some of the money they had invested.

In deciding to enter into the manufacturing business, they were making a far more perilous adventure. In the case of the corn mill, a considerable proportion of the productions had already an assured and a constantly growing market with the society's own members ; but in the weaving business it became necessary to look entirely to the open market for customers, and to manufacture goods not only for the home market, but for abroad. In bad times clothing is generally the first item to be affected, and hence the sales from a weaving mill may be almost entirely suspended ; but in the case of food there is always a market.

In the light of what has transpired since, it would have been better if the committee had decided to repay the surplus capital to the members, or otherwise to have reduced the rate of interest, on so much as represented the surplus, to something like what was being obtained for the money in the bank.

The committee, as usual, knew no fear, and went right ahead into the new business.

The president at this time was Mr. Henry Brooks, a shrewd and far-seeing business man, and the secretary (Wm. Hill), on whom the almost entire management of the business afterwards depended, had had a certain amount of training at Messrs. Jones Bros. before he commenced to work for the society.

The first suggestion to enter into the business appears in a letter in the *Leigh Chronicle* of December 9th, 1865, the writer asking : " Why do not the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society manufacture cotton goods ? "

The first record in the society's books appears on May 28th, 1866, when the following resolution was passed :—" That in the opinion of this committee it is wise and expedient to enter into the Cotton Manufacturing business as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made."

Shortly afterwards it was decided to print and circulate amongst the members 1,000 copies of the suggestions for the formation of a manufacturing department. The following is a copy of the leaflet issued :—

"Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society Ltd.,
"Ellesmere Street, Leigh.

"Suggestions from the committee for a manufacturing dept.

"1st. The Society to set apart a definite sum, say £10,000 for a manufacturing dept.

"2nd. The Society to appoint a Board of Directors for its management, consisting of nine persons, not less than five of which to have some practical knowledge of cotton manufacturing. All members of the Society to be eligible to election according to Rule 4.

"3rd. The Department to pay the Society 5 per cent for the capital.

"4th. The standard wages of the Trade to be paid to the hands.

"5th. The Depreciation on all Fixed Stock to be 10 per cent per annum.

"6th. A Redemption or Reserve Fund of 10 per cent on the Profits.

"7th. The nett Profit to be then divided in two equal parts; one half to be given to capital, and the other half to labour.

"8th. A Bonus to be paid to members, only in proportion to the wages of each.

"9th. The Bonus to be added to the member's share account, and to accumulate to a £5 share, to be transferable only.

"10th. When such share exceeds £5 the Bonus to be withdrawable.

"11th. All persons employed may become members on payment of the regular entrance fee."

The above elaborate arrangements for dealing with the profits are admirable, if they could only have been realised; but there is no provision for dealing with losses, this being a feature that our sanguine enthusiasts never dreamt of having to deal with, the word "failure" not being in their programme. Unfortunately, as it turned out, there was never any chance of carrying out their elaborate scheme of profit sharing. In the case of the weaving business it was much more important

than in that of the corn mill that a totally distinct capital should have been obtained, which should have been transferable only, and not have consisted entirely as it did of the members' ordinary withdrawable capital; and the interest or dividend to be paid on the capital invested should have been only so much as was actually made in profits by the business, instead of being, as it was, a guaranteed 5 per cent, secured from the ordinary retail business of the society, and thereby a constant menace on the members' usual dividend on purchases.

It is easy enough to be wise after the event, and as the object of these notes is to simply record what happened, it is useless now to further criticise.

An alteration of the rules was necessary to enable the society to enter into the business. This was done at a meeting of the members on July 9th, 1866, the following addition to the existing rules being made:—"And for the manufacture of cotton, or any other Textile fabric, from weft, yarn or cloth;" and the meeting decided—"That the committee be empowered to enter into the cotton manufacturing business, as far as the spare power of the corn mill engine will allow."

The following committee of six persons were appointed to draw up rules for the manufacturing department, viz.:—Richard Daniels, George Parr and Thomas Hardman, from the general body of members; and three members from the committee, consisting of the president (Mr. Henry Brooks), the secretary (Mr. Wm. Hill) and Mr. James Thomasson.

The first step taken was to ascertain from Messrs. Musgrave and Sons, the makers of the corn mill engine, as to "whether the Engine was sufficient to drive 144 looms with the requisite machines for winding, warping and dressing or slashing." No further steps seem to have been taken for about twelve months.

On September 30th, 1867, it was decided to make inquiries as to the terms on which the old silk weaving shed in Bridge-street, known as "Walker's Shade," could be purchased.

Nothing, however, came of this, and in the following

December the committee determined to proceed with their original intention of erecting a weaving shed of their own.

Messrs. Wm. Hill (secretary), John Bamber and Wm. Greenough were appointed a special committee "to prepare a rough plan and estimate for a weaving shed." They at once got to work, and in a fortnight afterwards they submitted their report to the committee, and it was approved by them, and at the quarterly meeting of members held a week later the following resolution was passed :—"That this meeting authorises the committee to commence cotton manufacturing, in the manner now recommended, and that they employ such portion of the surplus capital as the business may require."

The following was the report of the special committee :—

"In accordance with your instructions we have prepared a rough plan and estimate of our intended weaving shed, which we now submit for your approval.

"If constructed in accordance with this plan, it will hold 224 looms and will cost about £2,500.

"The gearing, shafting and 100 looms with machines for Winding, Warping, and Dressing or Slashing will cost about £1,500 in addition, together say £4,000.

"We recommend the society to purchase bricks flags, stone and pillars, in the best way they can, and get tenders for the labour. The Joiners, slaters and glaziers work we would recommend to be done by contract in one lot; the whole to be under the superintendence of an experienced builder.

Signed "William Greenough.
"John Bamber.
"Jan. 18th, 1868. "Wm. Hill."

Mr. Joseph Limon was engaged to prepare the working plans.

Contracts were entered into with the following parties :—

Picksley, Sims and Co.—Bricks at 20s. per 1,000 at the kiln, or 22s. delivered.

Picksley, Sims and Co.—Steam pipes.
John Wild and Co.—Lime at 14s. 2d. per ton.
Peter Stirrup—Sand at 2s. 10d. per ton.
John Collier—Bricklaying.
Musgrave and Sons—Shafting and gearing.
Townley and Johnson—Pillars and plates.
Richard Chadwick—Masons' work.
Wm. Boardman—Joiners' work.
Richard Fairclough—Flagging.
Atherton Bros.—Looms, winding, warping and dressing frames.

In February, 1868, Mr. Richard Prescott was added to the special manufacturing committee.

In December, 1868, it is stated that "The new weaving shed is now complete and has commenced working; it is placed under the direction of a committee of three persons having some practical knowledge of the business, who will make every exertion to work it successfully."

The estimated cost of the building and machinery as stated in the report of the special committee was £4,000, but the actual cost turned out to be £6,600.

The weaving shed having thus been set on its way, the result was, no doubt, awaited with some anxiety.

An interesting event, which is worth recording, took place prior to the machinery being put in the building. The general election for members of Parliament was taking place, and Messrs. Gladstone and Grenfell for the Liberals, and Turner and Cross for the Conservatives, each held very large meetings in the new building, for which meetings a nominal charge of only 10s. was made.

Notwithstanding the investment of about £12,000 in the buildings and machinery and working stock of the weaving department, the deposits of the members continued to increase so rapidly that in a little over three years from the commencement of the weaving mill the committee found themselves again with a large amount of unemployed capital, the interest on which proved to be a very serious addition to the working expenses.

On April 8th, 1872, a resolution was passed that "The committee be instructed to employ the surplus capital of the society in some branch of business;" and in the following month the general meeting of members decided to "adopt the recommendation of the committee to extend the weaving shed, to the extent of the land held by the society."

On October 7th the following resolution was passed by the committee:—"That the Manufacturing Committee be discontinued and that the business of that dept. be transacted by the General Committee."

Mr. Joseph Limon was again engaged to prepare plans and specifications for the extensions. These extensions involved the installation of a separate engine, as the portion of the weaving shed then in use was as much as the corn mill engine could manage. A compound beam engine was ordered of the same dimensions as the one used for the corn mill.

The extensions were completed early in 1874, and involved an additional outlay of nearly £10,000 for buildings and machinery. The total number of looms was increased to 540.

On the completion of these extensions to the weaving shed, the total amount of capital employed in the undertaking was about £25,000, and in less than twelve months afterwards the amount had increased to no less a sum than £30,000. If to this we add about £11,000 used by the corn mill department, we get the total of £41,000 out of the then £64,000 of members' share capital, or equal to five-eighths of the total, employed in what could only be described as speculative undertakings; and, notwithstanding these large investments, there was at the same time about £14,000 lying idle in the bank. One can only come to the conclusion that the committee in those days allowed their enthusiasm to run away with their discretion.

During the first nine years, to the end of 1877, the department, according to the printed reports on the balance sheet, although not producing results which enabled the committee to carry out their scheme of profit sharing, yet showed an average profit of about 6 per cent on the capital employed.

At one time a Reserve Fund had been accumulated out of the profits, amounting to £1,156. This, however, was afterwards absorbed to make up for less satisfactory results; and in 1875 the rule relating to the payment of bonus to the employés out of the profits of this department was rescinded.

The real troubles of the committee, however, commenced in the summer of 1878. The result for the half year, to June 30th, showed a profit of only £422, and as interest at 5 per cent amounting to £816 had to be paid, it was equivalent to a loss of 2½ per cent.

In addition to the bad state of trade, the committee during this period had to contend against several strikes on the part of the workpeople. The committee gave notice for a reduction of 10 per cent in wages; the weavers offered to accept 5 per cent; the committee then offered 7½ per cent. A general meeting of members was called, which recommended the committee to open the shed at a reduction of 5 per cent, which was done.

The committee, however, were not satisfied, and determined to bring up the matter again at the next general meeting of members. They decided to print and send out to the members the following circular, which was printed on the back of the balance sheet:—

"To the members.—The committee desire to call your attention to the business which the next general meeting to be held on October 14th will be called upon to consider, namely the question of a reduction of 10% in the wages of the weavers, notice of which you will doubtless be aware was given by the committee, some time ago, but owing to the action of a special general meeting, convened to discuss the matter, the full amount has not been enforced, a reduction of 5% only having been made.

"The decision of the quarterly meeting will be a matter of great importance to the members generally, because whatever deficiency below 5% for invested capital, may be made in that dept., it will have to be provided for from the only available source, and that will be out of the general dividend.

"Owing to the unprecedented depression in the cotton trade, the loss in the weaving dept. for the half year ending Dec. 31st, 1877, amounts to £76 and for the half year ending June 30th, 1878, the loss amounts to £422, being equal to 2½% on the capital of that dept. For the current half year the trade is still more unsatisfactory; the loss in which will probably exceed 3%.

"The committee therefore think it their duty to lay this important matter before the members in order to obtain as far as possible an expression of opinion from them, as to their willingness, or otherwise, to submit to a goodly portion of the general dividend being applied to meet such losses, and to keep up the present rate of wages.

"It was only after the most anxious consideration, and a full conviction of the necessity of such a step, forced upon them by the continued depression in the trade, that the committee reluctantly took any action in the matter, and they now hope the members will give the question their most serious consideration. They are urgently requested to attend the meeting."

It should be remembered that a large number of the employés in the weaving department were members of the society, and could therefore attend the meeting and vote against the proposed reduction of their wages, notwithstanding the depression in trade, and the fact that the business was showing considerable losses.

In spite of the urgent appeal of the committee, the members at the general meeting held on October 14th, 1878, passed the following resolution:—"That this meeting instruct the committee to continue paying the weavers the present rate of wages; and that the general dividend be made available to meet any loss in the weaving department."

The meeting was held in the Drill Hall, which will perhaps accommodate from 350 to 400 persons. The total number of members at that time being 3,570, it follows that only about one-tenth of the members could be present to record their votes, and of these a

considerable number would be employés, naturally interested in keeping up their wages. It will thus be seen that the constitution of the society, so far as dealing with the business of the weaving department, was in a very unsatisfactory condition, and well calculated to bring disaster to the whole society.

Matters drifted on in an unsatisfactory condition during the succeeding three years. Up to the end of 1880 the total losses, according to the printed balance sheets, amounted to £2,578, and of this about £2,000 had to be made up out of the profits of the other departments. These results were declared by the committee "to arise from a state of things unparalleled in the history of the cotton trade."

It had been the custom, from the commencement of the weaving department to take stock and present the balance sheets half yearly, instead of quarterly as in the other departments, and this half-yearly balance sheet was always three months behind. This arrangement gave the opportunity for what was afterwards proved to have taken place, viz., the manipulating of the stocks and the accounts generally.

The committee had on several occasions asked for the weaving department balance sheet to be completed earlier, but it was never complied with.

From a resolution which was passed on June 27th, 1881, it looked as if the committee had begun to suspect that there was something wrong, for they decide—"That the shed stocktakers be instructed to inspect the stock and initial the stock sheets, and that the secretary lay before them the rough draft of the balance sheet for the past half year." This balance sheet was never completed.

On August 1st it was decided—"That a special meeting of the committee be held for the purpose of considering a change in the management of the weaving shed;" and at the special meeting it is recorded—"That the secretary having informed the Board of his inability to attend to the increasing duties in connection with the management of the weaving shed, and requesting them, to relieve him of that duty, it is

hereby resolved to make a change in the management of that Dept."

Mr. Hill, the secretary, and also the manager of the weaving department, asked for a week's holiday, which was the first time he had been away from his duties for twenty-three years; the present secretary, Mr. T. Boydell, was appointed "to attend to the office work during his absence."

During Mr. Hill's absence the present secretary was trying to square up the bank account for the purpose of the completion of the balance sheet; this work having always previously been kept strictly in Mr. Hill's own hands. In pursuance of the work, it was found that the bank account had not been made up correctly to any given date. There was at the time not the slightest suspicion of anything being wrong. A visit was thereupon paid to Mr. Hill to get some explanation; the evasive answer he gave to the inquiry completely mystified Mr. Boydell. However, on further investigation, he was satisfied that what had been done could not possibly be correct. He thereupon went to the president, Mr. Leather, and reported what he had found. Mr. Leather then stated that Mr. Hill had sent a letter to the committee a few days previously, in which he admitted that the accounts were wrong. The secretary *pro tem.* was thereupon taken into confidence and asked to attend a meeting of the committee on the same evening, and he found that the committee had been meeting in the manager's house nightly for several nights.

A new manager was appointed for the weaving department in the person of Mr. Hartley Bracewell. Messrs. Kevan and Sons, of Bolton, were engaged to audit the weaving balance sheet; and before their report was made Mr. Hill sent in his resignation as secretary.

Various exciting reports began to be circulated in the town concerning the affairs of the society, and the committee decided to call a special meeting of the members, which was held in the Drill Hall on September 27th, 1881.

The meeting was packed, but only a small portion of the 3,288 members could obtain admittance. The committee made the mistake of excluding the representatives of the press; but that did not prevent them from getting particulars of what transpired. Mr. S. Partington, the representative of the *Leigh Journal*, performed the feat of reporting the meeting whilst standing on the narrow window-sill outside.

The president, Mr. Robt. Leather, presided, and assured them that there was no foundation for many of the alarming reports which had been circulated by their enemies. He stated that a letter had been received from Mr. Hill, the late manager of the shed, admitting that the balance sheets were incorrect. The books, he said, were in the hands of Messrs. Kevan, and in about a fortnight a statement would be placed before the members.

The following is a copy of the letter from Mr. Hill to the committee, referred to by Mr. Leather, and which was read to the meeting:—

September 8th, 1881.

To the Committee of the
Leigh Friendly Co-operative
Society Limited.

Gentlemen,

The time has come (a time that I have longed for and feared) when I must make a statement to the Committee, respecting the state of the accounts of the Society.

The Corn Mill, Grocery and Provision and Share Accounts are properly kept, and I believe they are correct. The Shed accounts are, I am grieved to say, very incorrect.

We were very unfortunate in the time selected for commencing Manufacturing; a time when yarn was more than double its present price, and wages were high.

For a short time we made a little profit, but prices being high, we could not sell all our productions to a profit, and the stock of goods accumulated to a large amount; and when the fall in prices set in, they had to be sold to a great loss.

This state of things forced on me the painful conviction of the grievous mistake we had made in embarking in Manufacturing; and that the business would, sooner or later, be the ruin of the Society.

This being my conviction, for some time I did not know what to do. I felt myself in a great dilemma, and in my concern for the Society (being blind to the consequences to myself) I devoted myself to doing the business so as to put

off the evil day, as long as I possibly could, using all the means at my command to attain that object ; and all the while hoping for a better trade to enable me to do it right.

During this time the accounts have been incorrectly kept, showing profit that has not been realized. I am guilty of making the Shed reports so as to shew a profit, when they should have shewn a loss ; and this has weighed so very heavily on my mind, that it has now broken me down, and I am unable to do it any longer. This has been done by regularly fixing the stock, at a figure above its value.

I have often longed and resolved to make this statement to the Committee, but when the time came, I could not muster courage to do it. But now finding my health failing me with the weight of this trouble, I find it impossible to bear it any longer. I cannot keep it from you any longer. I have not embezzled, or made use of the money of the Society. When all is entered up and properly balanced there should be a sum due to me.

In making this statement, I cannot ask you to forgive me for the wrong I have done. I do not deserve it. But I do beg and pray you will not punish my wife and family, they are innocent. Let all the punishment fall on me. Do not arrest me ; I will not—I cannot run away. If you decide to prosecute me, I will give myself up when you wish. I place myself entirely in your hands.

Your unworthy servant,

Wm. Hill.

Needless to say, this letter completely staggered the committee, and they scarcely knew which way to turn. The only course open to them was to call a meeting of the members, which was done as already mentioned.

It is worth recording that the meeting passed the following resolution :—" That this meeting accords its entire confidence in the president and committee and give them a special vote of thanks." The meeting also pledged itself " not to make a run on the funds of the Society in the present crisis."

Messrs. Kevan's report on the audit, which was given to a special meeting of the members on October 10th, 1881, however, came as a thunderbolt, almost paralysing the committee and the members. The result showed a deficiency in the manufacturing department of no less a sum than £19,445, and the report stated that " It appeared that after the extension of the premises in 1874, a loss was made, and it appeared that whoever had the authority to make the balance sheet for pub-

lication—and he believed that duty devolved upon the secretary—falsified the accounts to show a profit; the losses had continued every half year and been made to appear as profits, and interest had been paid over to the Society, when from the accounts no profit had been made. If that interest had not been paid over, the loss would have been £10,000."

Messrs. Kevan's advice to the committee was that the only way out of the difficulty was the winding up of the society. They, however, did not know the kind of men they were advising. They were not acquainted with the courage and indomitable perseverance with which these working men were animated, and which had been displayed from the commencement of the society.

The committee could not be induced to coincide with this view, and took immediate steps to seek advice elsewhere. The writer, who was present at the committee meeting when Messrs. Kevan's report was read, can see distinctly in his mind the late Mr. Wm. Baxter, who on hearing the advice to wind up said, in earnest and dramatic words: "No, Mr. Chairman, we will not wind up, we will seek advice from our friends in the movement." This at once focussed the opinion of the majority of the committee.

Prior to Messrs. Kevan's report being submitted to the members' meeting, the committee sent a deputation, consisting of the president (Mr. Robt. Leather), and Messrs. Hy. Brooks and Wm. Baxter, to Leeds, Bolton and Halifax societies to see what advice and guidance they could get to assist them. The services of the Co-operative Union were also obtained. The General Secretary of the Union, Mr. Edward Vansittart Neale, prepared a scheme for a kind of Redemption Fund, whereby the loss should be repaid out of future profits; the shares in the meantime being reduced in value to 16s. 8d. in the £. Mr. Thos. Wood, who at that time was the chief accountant at the Co-operative Wholesale Society, rendered invaluable service at this critical time.

After Mr. Kevan's report, this scheme of Mr. Neale's was fully explained to the meeting by Mr. Jos. Smith,

MR. THOMAS BOYDELL
(Commenced 1870; Secretary from 1881).

MR. RALPH STIRRUP
(Cashier from 1881).

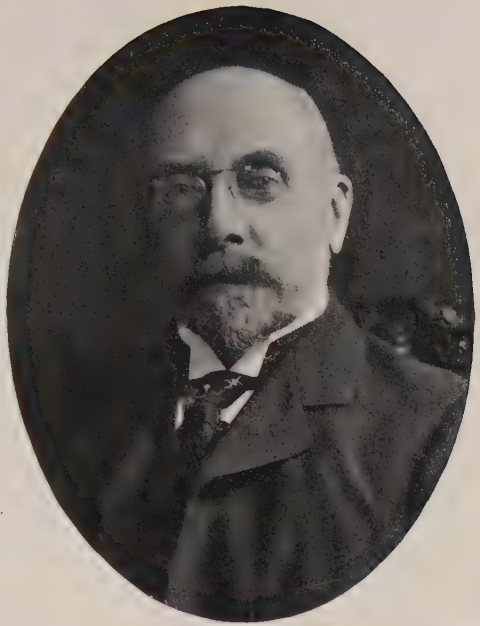


Photo by] [*Lafayette.*

MR. WILLIAM APPLEBY

MR. T. WOOD

(AUDITORS FROM 1881).

Mr. Neale's assistant, and was unanimously agreed to by the members.

Special rules were prepared to carry out the redemption scheme, which were submitted to an adjourned general meeting on October 18th and approved. At this same meeting a report was given by a special committee, consisting of Messrs. Thos. Hardman, Ralph Eckersley, Peter Hodson and Wm. Houghton, who had been appointed to make a careful valuation of the society's properties, and their report showed that the properties were worth £8,584 more than the nominal value shown on the balance sheet.

At this meeting also Mr. Thos. Boydell was unanimously elected to the position of secretary, and a few months later Mr. Ralph Stirrup was appointed cashier, and they have both retained the positions to the present day.

As Messrs. Kevan's audit had been confined to the weaving department, it was decided to have a complete investigation of the society's affairs, and Mr. Wm. Appleby, chartered accountant, of Manchester, was engaged for this purpose on October 21st.

Mr. Appleby's investigations were very exhaustive, as the writer has good reason for remembering, and extended, in the case of the weaving department, over a period of nine years, and were not completed until the end of the year. A special meeting was called on January 9th, 1881, to which Mr. Appleby gave a very lengthy report. The result of his investigations revealed an additional deficiency of £4,570 over and above what was shown at the time of Messrs. Kevan's audit. This increased loss was mainly accounted for by the fact that a large quantity of the stock of cloth, both at the mill and at Manchester warehouses, was found to be in an unsatisfactory condition, and had to be realised at a considerable sacrifice. The total deficiency was thus shown to be no less a sum than £23,570. Notwithstanding this alarming state of affairs, the meeting was not so excited as the previous one, the members having evidently got over the first shock. Mr. Appleby was appointed permanent auditor, and soon after he was

joined by Mr. Thos. Wood, and the firm of Appleby and Wood have been the society's auditors ever since.

The meeting also passed the following resolution :—

"That it be an instruction to the general committee, along with the special sub-committee, to take immediate proceedings against the late secretary, or other officers of the Society, if in their opinion and the opinion of their legal advisers, a charge of embezzlement can be established against him or any of them."

It will not be necessary to go into the details of the prosecution of Mr. Hill ; suffice it to say that, on the advice of the barrister engaged by the society, the charge of embezzlement was withdrawn against him, and he was given a sentence of one month's imprisonment for falsifying the accounts.

Thus ended the most dramatic experience in the history of the society, and one which, for the size of the society and the difficulties to be contended against, can scarcely be paralleled in the history of the co-operative movement throughout the country.

It will be readily believed that the meetings of the members at this time were very crowded and very excited, and the well recognised abilities of the president (Mr. Robert Leather) as chairman of the meetings were severely tried, and it was owing largely to his tact that the business of the meetings was got through so well.

A word of acknowledgment should also be given to the valuable services rendered by some of the members not officially connected with the society, who kept their heads, as the saying is, at the meetings, and did much to prevent panic amongst the general body of members. Prominent amongst these were the Rev. Dr. Karfoot, Messrs. Thomas Hardman, James Wild, W. H. Pennington, Ralph Eckersley and Edmund Potts. Mr. Potts' humour was at times invaluable, not only at the meetings at this time, but for a number of years afterwards ; in fact he proved himself to be a veritable Mark Tapley. Mr. Eckersley was elected president of the society six months later.

It is not proposed in this sketch to follow in detail

the further developments in connection with this department of the society. The committee struggled manfully with it for nine more years, successive managers being Mr. Hartley Bracewell, Mr. Richard Tootill and Mr. J. A. Ainsworth. From this time the results were given quarterly, and only on six occasions during the nine years did the department make a profit of more than 5 per cent, and all below this amount was a burden on the profits of the other departments.

Finally, in 1890, arrangements were made for letting the place on rental to Messrs. Bancroft and Garstang, they guaranteeing the society from all loss.

This was a tremendous relief to the members, who felt as if a great load had been lifted off their shoulders, and no member of the society felt this to be so more than the humble compiler of these notes, who had during the nine years borne a large share of the burden and the anxiety in connection with this department.

Messrs. Appleby and Wood, the society's auditors, were mainly responsible for bringing about the arrangement with Messrs. Bancroft and Garstang, and for this the members at a general meeting gave them a special vote of thanks.

The firm of Messrs. Whipp Bros. and Todd afterwards took over the responsibilities of Bancroft and Garstang, and in the year 1900 purchased the place from the society.

Looking back on the history of the society's venture into the weaving business, it will now be admitted by everyone that it was a great mistake to carry on the business with the members' ordinary withdrawable capital, and to have the profits of the distributive departments liable at any time to be swamped by losses in the manufacturing business. The business ought never to have been entered into except with transferable share capital, separately subscribed by the members and entirely distinct from the distributive business.

It will also be admitted that if the accounts of the weaving department had been regularly examined by competent auditors, the accumulation of the losses

almost throughout the entire period could not possibly have been hid in the way they were; and if it had been seen at the beginning that the department was not paying its way, steps could have been taken to safeguard the society from any great calamity taking place.

Whilst not attempting in any way to condone the action of the secretary and manager, Mr. Hill, the writer is strongly of opinion that he never derived the slightest pecuniary benefit from what took place, although he freely admitted the falsification of the accounts. It is very evident, from his letter to the committee, that, when the first loss was shown, he lacked the moral courage to disclose it, hoping, as he states, that in succeeding periods profits might accrue to set the matter straight. Instead, however, of such being the case, loss after loss kept accumulating, until the crash finally came.

Mr. Hill, as has been stated, was one of the founders of the society. He was a man of very considerable attainments, and was one of the founders of the old Leigh Mechanics' Institution. He was well up in astronomy and possessed a very fine telescope, which he presented to the technical school shortly before his death, which took place in February, 1896.

Being practically the organiser of the society's affairs from the beginning, the committee naturally placed the utmost confidence in him. Amongst his multifarious duties as secretary and manager of the weaving department, he on many occasions acted as architect and engineer. He was at times called upon to superintend the engine and boiler, and frequently took indications to test the work being done by them. His was a great career spoiled for want of moral courage at a critical moment.

Mr. Robert Leather
(President, 1867 to 1882).

Mr. Ralph Eckersley
(President, 1882 to 1883).

CHAPTER XIV.

1882–1885.

After the Storm; The Shares Redemption Account; Share Withdrawals Partially Suspended; H. Naylor, Drapery Manager; Robert Leather (President) Resigns after Fifteen Years' Service; J. Bardsley, Butchering Manager; Conference at Leigh; Branch at Butts Bridge; Joins the C.W.S. at last.

> "Sweet are the uses of adversity;
> Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

NOTWITHSTANDING the disaster which had overtaken the society, the committee, with their customary dogged perseverance, set to work afresh, to again build up the fortunes of the society.

Many of the more timid of the members sought to withdraw their shares, and it became absolutely necessary to suspend the payment of these. A new rule was quickly registered empowering this to be done.

The capital was divided into two accounts, called respectively the "Reduced Capital Account" and the "Capital Redemption Account." The Reduced Capital represented 16s. 8d. in the £, and the Redemption Account 3s. 4d. in the £. An account called the "New Capital Account" represented all new deposits, or accumulations of dividend or interest either from the old or new capital.

The Capital Redemption Account was to be gradually repaid to the members out of succeeding profits from the business.

Withdrawals of the old capital were entirely suspended for about twelve months, when a certain percentage was permitted to be withdrawn; and a sum of £200 per quarter to be paid out in urgent cases.

This suspension was gradually withdrawn, but it was not until ten years later that the restriction was entirely removed.

The value of the "old shares" was gradually increased out of the profits, as per rule; and in June, 1894, the entire amount had been repaid, thus making the shares again of the full value of 20s. in the £.

For a number of years the society had to struggle against many difficulties. The constantly recurring losses in the weaving department, although they were cleared off every three months out of the profits of the other departments, yet caused a feeling of uncertainty with many members. The sales at the shops fell off, and the rate of dividend paid was consequently less.

These were the days when the services of our auditors were most valuable, Messrs. Appleby and Wood attended nearly every quarterly meeting, and had it not been for the confidence placed in them by the members, and their repeated assurances as to the soundness and safety of the society's finances, the task of re-construction and re-habilitation would have been much more difficult.

The subsequent history of the society, being comparatively modern, and well within the recollection of most members living to-day, it will not be necessary to enter into it at any length, but simply to give a brief review of the leading incidents.

On January 16th, 1882, Mr. Salkeld, who had been manager of the drapery department since 1874, was summarily discharged, and Mr. Henry Naylor, who had been assistant in the shop since 1871, took his place, and has continued as manager to the present day. The results of the drapery department under Mr. Salkeld's management had been very unsatisfactory

Mr. Henry Naylor
(Commenced 1871; Drapery Manager from 1882).

Mr. David Marr
(Tailoring Manager from 1893).

for some years. Immediately on Mr. Naylor taking up the reins of management, the department, which for some time had been a drag on the other departments, became at once the most successful of the lot.

For a number of years when the society's business was almost at its lowest ebb, the success of the drapery department was doubly valuable. It is a remarkable fact that from December, 1882, to the present time, the net profit realised from the central drapery department, under Mr. Naylor's management, has never once been below 3s. in the £.

In April of this year, Mr. Robert Leather resigned the position of president. He had occupied that position uninterruptedly since 1867. Mr. Leather was one of the founders of the society, and he was one of the few young men who attended the mutual improvement class, in the building in Sugar-street; and it was from this class where the suggestion to commence the society originated.

Mr. Leather was an ideal chairman of a meeting; he was a very fluent and persuasive speaker; the writer will never forget the eloquent speech he made at a meeting of the members in 1877 in aid of a grant being made by the society to the fund for the relief of distress amongst the silk weavers.

Reference has already been made to the part he took in connection with the formation of the society's library and newsroom, and to the purchase and transfer of the books from the Leigh Mechanics' Institution to the society's library.

Mr. Leather was elected on the Pennington Local Board in 1873, and on the amalgamation of the three local boards of Pennington, Bedford and Westleigh, in 1875, he served as a member of the Leigh Local Board from 1875 to 1883.

It was a great loss to the society when he relinquished his active work in connection with the committee.

Mr. Ralph Eckersley, father to the present Councillor Eckersley, was elected to the position of president on the retirement of Mr. Leather. He, however, only retained the position for nine months, when he was

succeeded by Mr. Henry Duddle, who occupied the position until 1889, when he was appointed to be general manager of the society.

In June of this year, 1882, it was decided that "all our shopmen have one day's holiday at midsummer and be paid wages for the same."

This compares very unfavourably with present-day arrangements, when a week's holiday is allowed in summer, in addition to four other days during the year.

At this time the committee arranged for several meetings to be held at the branch shops, with the view of establishing confidence amongst the members, and to encourage the business at the shops.

On July 10th an important change took place in the butchering department, Mr. Daniel Kaye was for the second time discharged, and Mr. Jas. Bardsley, who had been his assistant for about six years, was appointed in his place.

The butchering business with our society, as with most others, is always a difficult one to control, and the results as a rule are seldom so satisfactory as in most other departments. Under Mr. Bardsley's management the department proved more successful for a long number of years than under any of his predecessors.

At the very same meeting at which Mr. Bardsley was appointed manager of the butchering department, Mr. Alfred Fox was appointed to manage the clog and shoe department in succession to Mr. Chas. Donnelly. Mr. Fox had been an assistant in the shop for four years. Under his management this department has been a fairly successful one right down to the present day; and a very great improvement on the preceding years.

It is a noteworthy fact that each of the three departments—the drapery, butchering, and clog and shoe, each of which had been unsatisfactory almost from the commencement—at once became successful departments on the appointment of the young men who had been brought up as assistants in the shops.

The first annual tea party and ball was held in the

MR. JAS. BARDSLEY
(Commenced 1876; Butchering Manager 1882 to 1905).

MR. ALFRED FOX
(Commenced 1878; Clog and Shoe Manager from 1882).

Assembly Rooms on March 31st, 1883. Prior to this, dancing had been tabooed by the committee. The committee reported "that it had proved a success," and proposed to continue them annually.

The following paragraph appears in the committee's report on the balance sheet for June, 1883 :—

"In accordance with the Resolution passed at the last General Meeting, the office has been open for the transaction of Share business, under the 'New Capital Account,' and you will notice from the Balance Sheet, that the Amount deposited during the quarter is more than double the sum withdrawn, which is a token of increased confidence ; and if the members will only hold together, and give the Society, in all its Branches, their undivided support, we shall soon have the entire confidence restored, and be in as flourishing a condition, as any well managed Co-operative Society. To give the members an idea of the steady improvement in the Society's position, since the troubles of 18 months ago, we may say that there has been paid in Dividends the sum of £7,401 ; allowed for Depreciation of Fixed Stock, £2,262 ; and with the amount we propose to devote this Quarter, we shall have cleared off an adverse Balance of £1,188."

In January, 1884, the society took advantage of an Act which had been passed a short time previously which extended the power of nominations of shares, from £50 to £100, with a certain restriction in cases where the amount was from £80 to £100.

An important event during this year was the invitation given to the Bolton District Association to hold their conference at Leigh. This was the first clear indication that the committee were beginning to realise the folly of the policy of isolation from other societies, which had been for a long number of years characteristic of the society, and consequently greatly to its loss. The conference was held on August 9th, in the room over the grocery department, Ellesmere-street.

In July, 1884, the branch at Butts Bridge was opened in a shop at the foot of the bridge owned by Mr. Wm. Miller. Mr. Andrew Hindley was the first shopman,

he having been an assistant for some time in the Bradshawgate shop.

This shop was rented from Mr. Miller until the beginning of 1892, when the present commodious premises were erected by the society.

In September of this year the tailoring department was transferred to a separate shop, having up to this time been carried on in the same premises as the drapery department; for this purpose the shop next door to the drapery was taken on rental from Mrs. Bowden. The hat and cap business was at the same time commenced in this new shop, along with the tailoring; a resolution stating—"That the Tailor be allowed to purchase £8 worth of Hats and Caps to stock the shop."

The committee evidently did not intend to overstock the place with hats and caps at the beginning.

At this time also a new departure took place in connection with the weaving department; about £400 being spent in fitting up about fifty looms for weaving velvets.

At the end of 1884 the committee's report congratulates the members on a considerable improvement in the business, and goes on to state that—"This improvement is most marked in the Drapery Department which is now one of the most successful branches of the society's business."

The following resolution of the committee recalls efforts which were made twenty years ago in connection with the obtaining of a park for the town, which have not yet borne fruit, except so far as our little park or gardens in Church-street is concerned. The resolution states—"That the Leigh Parks Committee have the use of the room over Bradshawgate shop for their meetings for 3 months free of cost." A further extension of the use of the rooms for three months was afterwards granted.

Reference has several times been made to the policy of isolation pursued by the committee in declining to attend conferences or to associate with other societies; the writer remembers on one occasion when an invitation was sent to attend a conference, one member of the

committee said: "It was no use going, they could teach us nothing, and it would only be throwing money away"; and this was soon after the bitter experience of the weaving department.

Too much self-confidence seems to have been a conspicuous feature in the character of most of the members of the committee in the early history of the society. They had achieved marked success in most of their ventures, success even far beyond their dreams, and hence they seemed to scorn the idea of requiring any outside assistance. This over self-confidence led them almost recklessly into the weaving business, which very nearly caused their ruin; and yet this same confidence led them to scorn the idea of winding up the society when the crash came, although advised to do so by professional men.

Equally fatuous was the attitude taken up with regard to joining the Co-operative Wholesale Society, as members.

The question had on several occasions been considered by the committeee and submittd by them to the general meetings, but had always been rejected by the members.

At the general meeting in February, 1885, a resolution "that the Society join the Co-operative Wholesale Society" was lost by twenty votes to seventeen.

As there was only a small meeting of members on this occasion, the matter was again brought before the members in the following October, and on this occasion it was at last carried that the society join the C.W.S.

The committee, as men of the world, were well aware of the advantage of keeping on good terms with the "Policeman," and had got the impression that, in some particular and isolated cases, the best way of getting on good terms was to "remember" him. Hence at this time appears a resolution—"That the Policeman on the beat near Firs-lane shop be given 2/6 and asked to pay particular attention to removing loiterers from about the premises." As there is no proof that the P.C. accepted the 2s. 6d., and may possibly have indignantly refused it, no harm can come to him, if he still lives, for now referring to this matter.

In October of this year the first branch drapery shop was opened at Tyldesley. The cottage adjoining the grocery shop being adapted for that purpose.

During the four years ending December, 1885, a fair amount of progress was made, notwithstanding the fact that in the weaving department for that period the result was a loss of £1,751.

The membership increased from 3,072 to 3,603, and the sales at the shops from £66,428 to £69,455. The average dividend paid for 1882 being 1s. 1¼d. and for 1885 1s. 8¾d. During this period also the Shares Redemption Account had been reduced from £11,521 to £7,584.

It should be pointed out that little more than one-half the members on the books were at this time trading at the shops.

CHAPTER XV.

1886-1890.

STEEL ROLLS REPLACE GRINDING STONES IN CORN MILL; PURCHASING A FOUNDRY; MR. W. DICKINSON (GENERAL MANAGER) RESIGNS; MR. HENRY DUDDLE APPOINTED; MR. PETER HODSON, PRESIDENT; NEW CHECK SYSTEM STARTED; MR. W. HURT, CORN MILL MANAGER; LOSSES IN WEAVING DEPARTMENT; WEAVING SHED LET ON LEASE.

"For this relief much thanks."

IN July, 1886, the first annual subscription of 10s. was paid to the Bolton District Association, and has remained at the same modest sum ever since.

The committee's report on the balance sheet for December, 1886, contains the following:—

"The Annual Tea Party will be held in the Assembly rooms on Saturday, Feby. 5; your Committee are very anxious to discourage members from bringing intoxicating drinks to the Tea Party, as this practice has brought an amount of discredit on some of our former meetings, and we trust the members will do their best to assist in this matter. We have also decided to have no dancing at our Tea Parties, as we believe that a good evening's entertainment, such as we are providing, will be more satisfactory to the majority of the members, and more creditable to the Society."

The circumstance mainly responsible for the above was the fact that a number of young men, under the

influence of drink, who were not connected with the society, gained admittance to the dance in the evening, and made themselves very objectionable.

During the summer of 1887 the corn mill was stopped nearly three months for the purpose of taking out the old grinding stones and replacing them with the roller mills. This involved an expenditure of about £1,860, and it was considered that the machinery of the mill was then quite up-to-date.

Prior to these alterations the committee sought the advice of the Rochdale Corn Mill Company, The Star Corn Mill Company, Oldham, and the Sowerby Bridge Corn Mill Society. The managers of each of these societies visited the mill and willingly gave their advice.

Early in 1888 a requisition was sent to the committee from the residents at Culcheth for a branch shop. A small shop, being the one next to the shop now occupied, was taken on rental. It did not, however, prove successful, and was given up after about two years, and it was not until seven years later that a branch was again opened in this district.

In February, 1888, the society purchased a disused foundry in Ellesmere-street, formerly occupied by Mr. Andrew Townley.

Shortly afterwards very considerable extensions were undertaken at the Central Depôt, Ellesmere-street. The building which had previously been the moulding shop for the foundry was converted into what was considered at the time a first-class bakery, fitted with ovens heated by hot air, instead of the old fire wagons which used to be put inside the ovens. The work was completed by Messrs. Mason and Sons, of Manchester. The old bakery was added to the grocery warehouse and the manager's house adjoining was converted into an office, with committee room and waiting room. The work was done by Mr. Henry Eyet, builder, of Leigh, Messrs. Bradshaw and Gass, of Bolton, being the architects. Another of the old buildings belonging to the foundry is still used as a slaughter-house.

In January, 1889, the first subscription of £1 to the "old folk's treat" was given.

MR. HENRY DUDDLE
(President, 1883 to 1889; General Manager from 1889).

MR. PETER HODSON
(President, 1889 to 1893).

In March Mr. Wm. Dickinson resigned his position as general manager. Mr. Dickinson was one of the founders of the society, and had been in its employ from the commencement. He succeeded Mr. Adam Smith as manager in 1868, having thus occupied the position for a period of twenty-one years.

Mr. Henry Duddle, who was at that time a member of the committee, was appointed to succeed Mr. Dickinson, and has continued as manager to the present day. On Mr. Duddle's appointment to the position of general manager he had to resign the position of president, which he had occupied for six years. Mr. Peter Hodson was elected to succeed him as president.

For the quarter ending September, 1889, the sales at the shops showed a very considerable falling off, with the result that the dividend dropped down to 1s. 6d. in the £. The committee referred to the matter as follows :—

"We are sorry to report a further considerable falling off in the sales at the shops, the average purchases per member being only 6/- per week. This cannot represent anything like the spendings of the members, and as we have often pointed out, the necessary expenses, we are compelled to incur, are sufficient for doing at least double the amount of business, we are now doing, and this of itself makes all the difference, between a low and a satisfactory Dividend.

"We must remind those of our members, who are receiving 5% interest on their investments, without doing anything, or very little, towards supporting the Society with their purchases, that they are taking the best course for impeding the growth of their own Society, and the source from which their interest is derived, by holding themselves aloof, and making their purchases elsewhere.

"You are no doubt aware that the Society's existence is dependent on the support which the members extend to the shops.

"The concern is your own, and it rests entirely with you whether you will allow the sales to go less, which means less Dividends, or whether you will do your best

to support the Society, and thereby ensure more satisfactory Dividends, and assist in the successful development of the Society."

In December of this year the present system of checks was started, using small paper checks and gum sheets, every check bearing the shopman's number and a consecutive number. Each check, on being made out by the shopmen, copies through carbon paper on to duplicate sheets. These sheets are sent to the office by the shopmen along with the cash represented by them. On the members bringing in their gum sheets filled with the checks, these checks are compared with the duplicates sent in by the shopmen, so that any attempted alteration is at once discovered. This is known as the "Eccles" check system.

In May, 1890, still another change took place in the management of the corn mill. Mr. Jos. Wyatt, who had been manager since 1879, resigned to go into business on his own account. Mr. Wyatt's services to the society extended over a period of twenty-three years. He served a four years' apprenticeship to the corn milling, from 1867 to 1871. Afterwards he became foreman in the mill, and manager from 1879 to 1890. He proved himself a very capable and successful manager. Mr. Wm. Hurt, who had some time previously been a manager of the Star Corn Mill, Oldham, was appointed to succeed Mr. Wyatt.

In September of the same year the committee announced the increase in value of the "Old Share Capital" from 17s. 6d. to 18s. in the £; and at this time the Leigh-road drapery and butchers' shops were opened. The drapery under the management of Mr. W. Seddon and the butchering that of Mr. Henry Pegg.

In December the committee congratulated the members on being able to declare the highest rate of dividend which had been paid in the history of the society, viz., 2s. 2d. in the £.

The record for these five years, ending December, 1890, is one of steady progress and gradual emancipation from the fetters inflicted on the society in 1881.

In March, 1886, the losses on the weaving department

were again increased by the addition of £786, owing to the determination to clear off a large stock of cloth which had accumulated in the mill. This loss, along with others in the following quarter, amounted to £985, and was carried to a "Cloth Depreciation Account," which was a drag on the profits of the general departments until December, 1890.

During the five years the total loss on the weaving department amounted to £4,127, and it was with very considerable relief when the committee were able to announce in their report on the balance sheet for September, 1890, after completing the arrangements with Messrs. Bancroft and Garstang, that "the management of this department has now been transferred and they (Bancroft and Garstang) will from that date be responsible for the results of the working of this department during the term of the agreement. We hope and believe that from henceforth we shall be free from all loss in this department, and that it will no longer be a burden on the Society as hitherto."

During the five years, although the membership increased from 3,603 to 3,971, the members' share capital was reduced by £5,177.

The sales at the shops during the year 1890 showed an increase of £5,083 over those for 1886, and the average dividend for the year was increased from 1s. $7\frac{1}{4}$d. to 1s. $10\frac{3}{4}$d.

CHAPTER XVI.

1891–1895.

Strike at Weaving Shed; Branch Shops at Twist-lane, Plank-lane and Physic; Thanks from Shop Assistants' Association; Reserve Funds; Breakdown in Corn Mill; Securing Site for Central; Mr. John Smith elected President; Electric Lighting; Redemption Fund cleared off; Review of 12½ Years' Work; Revision of Rules; Branch at Brideoake-street.

> "Thus far our fortune keeps an upward course,
> And we are graced with wreaths of victory."

AT the commencement of 1891 Messrs. Bancroft and Garstang, who had then full control of the weaving mill, experienced considerable difficulty with the weavers. They were introducing a class of work which was new to Leigh weavers, and naturally, for a short time, they had some difficulty in earning as much wages as hitherto. They were assured that they would soon get used to the work, and be able to earn far more wages than they had ever done before. After events proved the truth of this statement.

Unfortunately, at this time, Messrs. Bancroft and Co. had a dispute with their weavers at their Todmorden Mill, which led to a strike there. The officials of the Weavers' Association approached the Leigh weavers and induced them also to come out on strike. It was argued by them that the firm were not paying

the standard rate of wages. This was disputed by Messrs. Bancroft and Co., who claimed that, owing to an improved system of dressing the warps which they had introduced, the weavers were enabled to earn more wages than before.

The strike naturally caused the committee of the society a good deal of anxiety, as there appeared to be great danger of its resulting in the weaving mill being again thrown on their hands. This was anything but a pleasant prospect after the previous experience in connection with the mill. Messrs. Bancroft and Garstang wrote to the society, asking on what terms they could be relieved of their control of the mill.

After the strike had lasted sixteen weeks, an arrangement was agreed upon, which might just as well have been adopted at the commencement, that it should be left to Messrs. Joshua Rawlinson, representing the Weavers' Union, and Thos. Birtwistle, the Employers' Association, to decide on what should be the list price to be paid for the particular class of coloured goods which were manufactured by the firm.

One satisfactory result of the strike, however, was that the weavers in Leigh, who had up to this time been without any kind of organisation, were formed into a branch of the Bolton and District Weavers' Association.

It was very evident that the results of the weaving department had been a serious check to the progress and development of the society's business, for no sooner had the members begun to realise that the new arrangement meant a relief of the burden they had been bearing for so long than an immediate improvement began to show itself.

The first quarter of March, 1891, showed an increase of sales amounting to £1,738, and the dividend went up from 2s. 2d. to 2s. 6d.

At the end of this year the tailoring department, which had been carried on in the shop next door to the old drapery shop, was removed to a shop across the street, next to the "broad entry," the old tailors' shop being then added to the drapery department.

The erection of the present Butts shop was com-

menced at this time, by Mr. J. T. Calland, builder; Messrs. Banks, Fairclough and Stephens being the architects.

The corn mill department, under Mr. Hurt's management, was giving better results than ever in the past, and still further changes in the machinery were decided upon; these, when completed, involved an outlay of £1,436. In December, 1891, the committee's report stated that "The work was now completed, and we are able to produce about 1,000 sacks of flour per week, and of the very best quality."

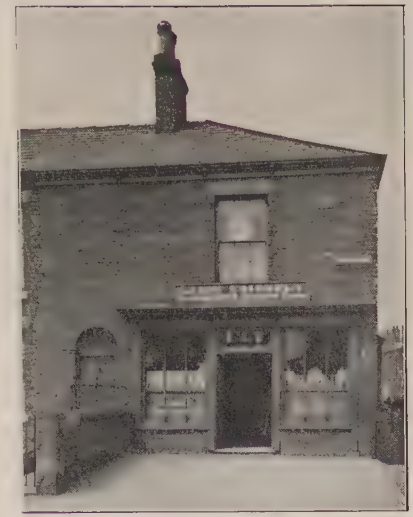
In March, 1892, two new branch shops were opened, one in Twist-lane and the other in Plank-lane, both of which were taken on rental; and six months later the erection of a new shop at Lowton was completed; the old and unsuitable premises having been occupied since 1862.

In September of this year, the foundation stone of the Leigh Technical School and Free Library was laid and on this occasion a trades procession took place. Our society's turn out consisted of a lurry containing a loom driven by an engine, and a weaver at actual work; also our bakers were shown at work on another lurry, and our corn mill, grocery and drapery departments made a very brave show in the procession. On this occasion our society came off with flying colours, and was generally voted to have by far the largest and best turnout.

An interesting event took place in September of this year; a deputation from the "Leigh Shop Assistants' Association" waited on the committee and informed them that their association had passed the following resolution:—"That the best thanks of the Association be given to the Committee of the Society for the interest they have shown in their shop assistants, by shortening their hours of labour to the extent of 8 hours per week. —Signed, G. A. Cook, chairman, J. Clarke, secretary."

In September, 1892, the committee were urging on the members the importance of building up a substantial Reserve Fund, and were appropriating no less a sum than £732 out of the profits to this purpose, and

Butts Bridge Branch
(Commenced 1854).



Plank Lane Branch
(Commenced 1892).

TWIST LANE BRANCH
(Commenced 1892).

PHYSIC BRANCH
(Commenced 1895).

they state in their report that "we believe this to be the best and soundest course to adopt; and if this policy had been adhered to in the past history of the society, instead of paying away all the profits in Dividends, the rude shock, which came upon us some years ago, would not have been felt, or have hindered the progress of the Society, to anything like the extent it did."

The committee recommended that a dividend of not more than 2s. 6d. in the £ should be paid, until a substantial Reserve Fund had been built up. This policy was adhered to for two years, and during that time over £4,000 was added to the Reserve Fund.

So great had been the improvement in the society's financial position in two years' time, that the committee decided to remove all restrictions on share withdrawals, and they state that "we are of opinion that our Financial position is now so strong, that this course may be adopted both with safety and profit to the Society."

In March, 1893, a very serious breakdown occurred to the corn mill engine. The crank pin broke, causing the cylinder end to be knocked out, the spur wheels broken, and the whole of the machinery was thrown out of gear for nearly two months.

It was thereupon decided to purchase a new engine and boiler for the corn mill, and put in additional new machinery, which altogether cost £2,100. The building of the corn mill was also extended by erecting the five-storey building over the engine house at a further cost of £1,020. On the completion of the work a formal opening was held, to which the committees of a number of other societies were invited.

During the summer of 1893 a dispute arose in the mining industry, which caused a general lockout, which lasted for several months. There was in consequence a great amount of distress in the district. Soup kitchens were organised in various parts of the town. Our society contributed the sum of £250 to the funds, and obtained for the same a donation of £100 from the C.W.S. These sums, along with numerous sub-

scriptions in both money and goods from parties with whom the society did business, amounted altogether to about £450, which was paid to the Relief Fund. Arrangements were also made for the miners to be paid their dividends in advance at any time during the quarter.

In pursuance of the policy of obtaining a large site in Bradshawgate, which the committee had for a long time been striving to procure for the purpose of erecting central premises thereon, negotiations were opened for the purchase of the four shops adjoining the grocery shop in Bradshawgate, and also the house, for a long time occupied by Dr. Anderton. The purchase was completed for the sum of £5,250. This gave the society an entirely square block from Bradshawgate to Gas-street. Two of the shops, along with Dr. Anderton's house, were let on a rental to several tenants.

The tailoring business was at this time removed from the shop next to the broad entry in Bradshawgate to one of the shops adjoining the then grocery shop at the corner of Albion-street. The other tailoring shop being then converted into a furniture shop.

In April, 1893, another change in the presidency took place ; Mr. Peter Hodson, who had occupied the position for four years, was engaged to collect cash from the shops, and had in consequence to resign the position of president. Mr. Hodson continued to occupy the position of cash collector for a period of twelve years, until 1905.

Mr. John Smith was thereupon elected president, and has continued to occupy the position to the present time.

About this time the secretary completely broke down in health, owing no doubt to the very anxious and exhausting time he had to contend with during the previous ten years, coupled with the fact that the work of the office had been carried on in a very small and badly ventilated room, and the numerous committee meetings held in the room over, which was equally unsatisfactory. A five weeks' holiday at the Canary Islands contributed very largely towards his

Mr. John Smith
(President since 1893).

restoration to health. The committee generously granted him the sum of £20 towards the expenses of the outing, which was very much appreciated.

During the secretary's absence, Mr. Ralph Stirrup, the cashier, took charge of the office.

On May 15th, 1893, Mr. David Marr, our present tailoring manager, was engaged, having previously been in the employ of the West Calder Society, near Edinburgh.

The first of our shopmen's annual festivals was held in November of this year, to which the committee were invited.

Several important matters were decided at the quarterly meeting, held on July 28th, 1894 :—

1st. "That a Donation of £100 be given to the fund for the erection of Leigh Technical School and Free Library."

2nd. "An electric light installation for the Corn Mill and Offices and Central Depôt, Ellesmere St."

3rd. "Extensions to be made to the Central Depôt, so as to provide additional Stables, Warehouses for Corn Mill and Grocery Department and a meeting room suitable for the Society's Quarterly Meetings." These extensions, along with the electric light installation, cost £2,520.

4th.—And most interesting of all—"That a sufficient sum be transferred from the General Reserve fund, to the Share Reserve fund, so as to make the 'old shares' from this date of the full value of 20/- in the £."

In the matter of electric lighting, not only were the corn mill and other premises in Ellesmere-street fitted up, but a cable was carried overhead on poles to the drapery and furnishing shop at the east end of Bradshawgate.

The society were the pioneers in Leigh for the lighting of shops by electricity ; this being before the time that the Corporation obtained powers to commence their electricity department.

A special meeting of the members, followed by a tea party and entertainment, was held in the Assembly

Rooms on September 21st, 1894, to celebrate the clearing off of the "Redemption Account."

The secretary read a report to the meeting, which, as it summarises the work of the society from the great disaster of 12½ years before up to that time, shall be given in full.

The report was as follows :—

"SECRETARY'S REPORT.

"Fellow members,—It affords me very great pleasure to have the opportunity of reading to you a brief report showing the progress of the society during the past 12½ years, and it is an especial pleasure because of the fact that the results which I have to read to you are of a very satisfactory character. Most of you will, no doubt, have a lively recollection of the condition of the society's affairs which was made known to you early in the year 1882 ; and I need not dwell on the terrible anxiety which then prevailed amongst the members, and the fear of some that the society would go to ruin, and nearly all their hard-earned savings be lost. At the time it was confidently predicted by our competitors that the society would never see over its difficulties. Those of the members, however, who knew something of the strength of the Co-operative movement, and how there were thousands of co-operators in other towns all over the country, to whom we could confidently appeal for advice and assistance, if need be, were not so easily daunted ; and I think I may safely say that we have now heard the last of the society coming to grief. You will remember that at the time I have referred to, the members' shares had to be reduced in value to 16s. 8d. in the £, the sum of £11,520 representing the 3s. 4d. in the £ which was deducted. However, as you know, it was arranged that this sum should be gradually repaid out of the profits, and you are here to-day to celebrate the fact that the whole of that amount has now been made good. Many members have unfortunately had to withdraw their shares from time to time, and have thus not been able to reap the full benefit of the repayments. Those, however, who have

let their money remain in the society, have the satisfaction of knowing that, notwithstanding the deduction that was made, the present full value of their shares is just as much as if no deduction had been made, and that they had been receiving compound interest at the rate of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent instead of 5 per cent for the whole of the period. I am sure you will all agree that after all, the sacrifice of one-half per cent on the part of the shareholders has not been a very serious matter. A member who had £100 in the society, and allowed it to remain during the $12\frac{1}{2}$ years, would now be possessed of £174 by the addition of interest alone; whereas, had the money been withdrawn at 16s. 8d. in the £, and deposited elsewhere say at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent, he would have been the loser to the extent of £58. Twelve years ago we were compelled to place restrictions on the withdrawal of Share Capital, whilst to-day our difficulty is to know what to do with the money which the members keep bringing for investment. During the $12\frac{1}{2}$ years the membership has increased from 3,069 to 5,890, an increase of 2,821, and the Share Capital from £55,551 to £82,974, an increase of £27,423. The sales at the shops for the year ending June, 1882, were £65,409, and for the year ending June, 1894, £120,022, an increase of £54,613; and the nett profits from the shops for the same periods were £4,793 and £15,776 respectively, showing an increase of £10,983. In addition to clearing off the large amount of the Redemption Fund, the buildings, machinery, and fixtures have been depreciated to the extent of £18,220, and there has been spent in repairs to the properties £7,168, and during the same time the members have received in dividends no less a sum than £94,257, and in interest on shares £35,449. A Reserve Fund has also been accumulated amounting to £3,542. In the corn mill department quite a revolution has been brought about. The mill has been considerably enlarged and filled with new machinery, including also a new engine and boiler at a total cost of £9,105, and during the same period depreciation has been deducted to the amount of £5,110. We are assured that we now have

a mill which is second to none in the country in its adaptability for manufacturing flour of the very best quality. As to our weaving department, which you are all aware has been the cause of all our troubles, a new and more satisfactory state of affairs has been established. For the past four years the mill has been worked by Messrs. Bancroft and Co., of Manchester and Todmorden, and during that time we have been secured by them from all loss in this department, whilst previously we had to contend with losses of over £1,000 per year. During the 12½ years new branch shops have been opened at the following places, viz. :— Grocery shops at Butts, Plank-lane, and Twist-lane ; butchers' shops at Bedford, Kirkhall-lane, and Firs-lane ; drapery shops at Kirkhall-lane and Tyldesley ; and furniture shops at Bradshawgate and Kirkhall-lane. An entirely new shop has been erected at Lowton, and extensive additions made at Boothstown and several other places. We have also purchased a very central block of premises adjoining our grocery shop in Bradshawgate, which we believe will in the future prove to be of great advantage to the society. Extensive additions are at present in progress at our central premises in Ellesmere-street, and an electric light installation is being placed in the corn mill, offices, and stores. A new and elaborate check system has been established, and is working satisfactorily, in place of the old tin checks, which were proved to be liable to so many irregularities. I think you will agree with me that what I have read to you is no mean record of work done and of progress made ; and if such progress can be made whilst we have been struggling with a host of difficulties, what may we expect now that our burdens have been cleared away. I venture to assert that if the members will only be loyal to the society and realise to the full the value of the institution they have built up, that our progress in the future will be very much more rapid than it has been in the past."

An interesting item in local history is brought to mind by a resolution passed at the quarterly meeting, held on January 26th, 1895, which was as follows :—

"That the Society be a Guarantor to the extent of £100 towards the promotion of the contemplated new railway through Leigh."

Strenuous efforts were made with the view of getting a direct line from Manchester to Liverpool through Leigh; which, if it could have been accomplished, would not only have given better service, but in all probability have brought about reduced charges, both for goods and passenger traffic. We are still, however, bound hand and foot to the L. & N.-W. Ry. Co., who will not even consider the wishes of the inhabitants, expressed in public meetings, to the extent of removing a ridiculous and objectionable name from the principal station in the town.

In February, 1895, the large block of premises, called Physic Branch, comprising grocery, boot and shoe and butchering shops, were opened. Mr. Thos. Peters was the architect, and Mr. J. T. Calland, the contractor.

In April of this year a complete revision of the society's rules was registered. The principal features being a new set of rules for the building and mortgage department, and the dropping out of the special rules previously in force, for the weaving and corn mill departments, and provision for a separate Educational Committee, elected by the members.

In June of this year the dividend was, for the first time, increased to 3s. in the £, and has remained at this rate ever since.

In October, the new shop erected in Brideoake-street was opened for business.

CHAPTER XVII.

1896-1907.

New Central Premises; Presentation to Mr. Jno. Smith, President; Fourteen New Branch Shops Opened; Mr. Collins appointed Corn Mill Manager; Half-yearly Stocktakings; District Representation; New Offices Erected; New Bakery and Stables; Success.

"When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past."

THE business of the society was now increasing so rapidly that the committee found it necessary not only to look out for positions for additional shops, but also to enlarge and improve some of the existing shops. Considerable extensions were made in connection with the Golborne, Hindley Green, Leigh-road and Westleigh branches; and a noteworthy feature in connection with these improvements was that the entire cost was charged to current expenses.

The New Central Premises.

The great event, however, which at this time was occupying the attention of the committee was the scheme which had long been looked forward to for erecting a large central premises, in which the various businesses could be brought together, instead of the members having to travel something like 200 yards from the grocery to the drapery department.

CENTRAL PREMISES, BRADSHAWGATE AND ALBION STREET (Opened June 3rd, 1899).

The site on which the building is erected had been recognised by the committee for a long time as a most suitable one for a central building for the society, and with this object in view, the committee very wisely took every favourable opportunity of purchasing the several properties adjoining the old grocery shop at the corner of Albion-street. The old shop just referred to was purchased in 1859 from Mrs. Alice Smith for the sum of £312. The premises were practically rebuilt and extended, bringing up the total outlay to £1,360. In the year 1890 four old cottages in Albion-street were bought from the late Dr. Anderton for the sum of £679, thus giving the society the entire frontage of Albion-street, from Bradshawgate to Gas-street. Next came the purchase, in 1893, of the four adjoining shops in Bradshawgate, along with "Phœnix House," for a long time the residence of Dr. Anderton. This property, which included the land and buildings right through from Bradshawgate to Gas-street, was bought for £5,250.

The society had thus, at last, secured an almost square plot of land, in the very centre of the town, with the great advantage of having streets on three out of the four sides. The actual area of the land is 1,740 square yards; the ground rent £10. 15s. per year, or nearly 1½d. per yard. The frontage to Bradshawgate is 127ft. and to Albion-street 113ft.

Our president, Mr. John Smith, ever since his connection with the committee, has exercised his practical skill in designing and arranging many of our branch shops; and each of the architects employed from time to time by the society has borne testimony to the great assistance they have received from the ideas and the drawings submitted to them by Mr. Smith.

Many were the meetings held by the committee, and suggestions of all kinds were brought forward as to the best way of utilising the site and getting the best and most convenient arrangement of the building. Our president had now found a task that was thoroughly congenial to him, and for months he was absorbed with it. Amongst the suggestions submitted was one for

having a kind of arcade running through the centre of the site. The outline, however, which was finally adopted was submitted by the president in a rough sketch, which is still preserved at the society's office. Mr. J. C. Prestwich was engaged as architect, and the result is a building of which both the society and the architect have reason to be proud.

One very great difficulty to be contended with was how to find accommodation for the business to be carried on whilst the old premises were demolished and the new building erected. For this purpose the building was erected in two sections. The westerly end, used for the drapery and furnishing business, was first erected on the site previously occupied by Dr. Anderton's house. On the completion of this portion, the grocery, butchering and tailoring businesses were temporarily located in it, and the whole of the remainder of the building was then proceeded with.

About six months after the building had been in progress it occurred to one or two members of the Leigh District Council that a mistake had been made, and that the society should have been asked to set the building line further back in Bradshawgate. This led to prolonged negotiations being opened, and in the end terms were agreed upon and the front portion of the building already erected was pulled down and set back about eight feet. This, undoubtedly, was a wise decision for all parties concerned, as the result is a great improvement in the street and in the appearance of the building.

Mr. J. W. Cowburn, of Leigh, was successful in obtaining the contract for the entire buildings, and he set about the work with his usual energy, and, notwithstanding the pulling down of part of the frontage to set back the building line, strikes of the engineers, joiners, plasterers and bricklayers, the building was completed nearly up to contract time.

In the new premises accommodation was made for a new departure in the list of businesses carried on by the society, viz., that of the confectionery and restaurant. The first manageress was Miss Baron, who

Mr. Henry Pegg

(Commenced 1880; Butchering Manager from 1905).

Miss Thornton

(Confectionery Manageress from 1905).

Mr. John Gregory

(Commenced 1884; Shop Inspector from 1902).

BRIDEOAKE STREET BRANCH
(Commenced 1895).

CULCHETH BRANCH
(Commenced 1897).

WIGAN ROAD BRANCH
(Commenced 1897).

ST. HELENS ROAD BRANCH
(Commenced 1897).

carried on the business very successfully for a period of 2½ years until May, 1902. Successive manageresses have been Misses Gregory, six months; Worthington, six months; O'Dwyer, twelve months; Thornton, from June, 1905, to present day.

The formal opening by the president, Mr. John Smith, took place on June 3rd, 1899. Delegates were present from twenty-eight other co-operative societies.

In the evening a great meeting of members was held and congratulatory speeches made, Mr. John Smith again presiding.

Mr. Wm. Bellamy, on behalf of the society, presented the president with a handsome black marble timepiece and bronze side ornaments, which bore the following inscription:—"Presented to Mr. John Smith by the Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society Limited, on the occasion of the opening of the new central premises, as a token of appreciation of his valuable services to the Society; having served on the Committee from the year 1881 to 1893 and as President from the year 1893 up to this present day."

Mr. Smith joined the society in March, 1867, and he has taken an active interest in its affairs for a period of over forty years.

Few, if any, of our members made so humble a beginning as a co-operator than did the one who has now been the president of the society for fourteen years. At the urgent request of members of the committee, he has on one or two occasions, at the members' meetings, referred to his early experiences, as an encouragement to the poorer members. He had a hard struggle in the bringing up of a large family on small earnings, and to enable him to pay the necessary entrance fee of 1s. he had to give up the payment of a weekly subscription of 1½d. per week, which he had been paying to a sick club in connection with Pownall's silk mill, and save it until he had accumulated the required amount, when he joined the society. For a number of years he was compelled to accept a lower rate of dividend for his checks between the quarter days, as he could not afford to wait to the end

of the quarter for the full dividend. Afterwards, he was able to allow his dividends to gradually accumulate until they reached the full amount that a member is permitted to have in shares in the society.

Mr. Smith has represented the society for fourteen years on the executive of the Bolton District Association, having been chairman for three years.

He has always taken a very active part in any movement in the town for the benefit of the working classes. He has served on the committee for the "old folk's treat" for twenty years. He has been an Oddfellow for fifty years, having passed through all the offices and been N.G. in 1860. He has been connected with the Leigh and District Burial Society for forty years, and been in office nearly the whole of the time, and treasurer for the past six years. He was also elected one of the first Govenors of the Leigh Infirmary.

There will be no member of our society more justly proud of the position our society has attained and of the celebration of its Jubilee year.

When it was first proposed to take in hand the erection of a large central building, some of the more timid members shook their heads and said a great mistake was being made, and they would never be able to get the money to pay for it. At the time the contract was let the society had about £10,000 lying in the bank. At the date of the opening ceremony, after about £19,000 had been paid on account of the contract, the balance in the bank had gone up to £20,000; thus falsifying the prophecy of the timid ones.

In March, 1896, the society purchased the four shops adjoining the central premises, and in 1903 two other shops adjoining these; in each case the land extends right through from Bradshawgate to Gas-street. The length of frontage in Bradshawgate now owned by the society is about 70 yards.

In April, the extensive premises in Bag-lane, Atherton, were completed, and comprised grocery, drapery and butcher's shops. The drapery business was afterwards transferred to Church-street, Atherton, and the boot and shoe business took its place in the shop at Bag-lane.

ELLESMERE STREET BRANCH
(Commenced 1897).

RAILWAY ROAD BRANCH
(Commenced 1898).

HOPE STREET BRANCH
(Commenced 1900).

FIRS LANE (BARKER STREET) BRANCH
(Commenced 1901).

Mr. Joseph Wyatt
(1879 to 1890).

Mr. William Hurt
(1890 to 1896).

Mr. John Collins
(from 1896).

Corn Mill Managers.

In May of the same year the beerhouse and two old cottages at Astley were sold to the Bedford Brewery Co. (now Geo. Shaw and Co.), and from the same firm the society purchased a shop and two cottages in St. Helens-road. One of the cottages was added to the shop, which is now one of the most commodious of the society's branches. The shop was opened for business in October, 1897.

A noteworthy event was the issue of the society's first *Monthly Record*, in July, 1896.

In December another change took place in the management of the corn mill. On the death of Mr. Wm. Hurt, who had occupied the position of manager for $6\frac{1}{2}$ years, with very satisfactory results, Mr. John Collins was appointed his successor. As in the case of Mr. Hurt, Mr. Collins had previously been manager of the Star Corn Mill, Oldham. Under Mr. Collins' management this department has been an unbroken success right up to the present time. The many alterations and improvements which have taken place in the machinery since his appointment have been due to his ingenuity and foresight, and to a very large extent the arrangements of the machinery, &c., are his own.

In February, 1897, the society gave a donation of £100 to the Indian Famine Relief Fund. Three years later the same amount was given for the same purpose, as well as £150 to the local "Transvaal War Relief Fund."

The record of the society's work from this time forward is one of continual progress and prosperity, as will be seen on examination of the tabulated statement at the end of this book.

In June, 1900, the rule relating to the election of the educational committee was amended. The arrangement made in 1895 was for four out of the six members of the committee to be elected by the members at the general meeting, and the other two to be appointed by the general committee from their own number. The object of this arrangement being to keep the two committees well in touch with one another, which is

undoubtedly a very desirable object to accomplish. The amended rule provided for the whole of the educational committee being elected by the members.

A further amendment of the rules was made in February, 1901, which provided for—(1) Half-yearly instead of quarterly stocktakings; (2) District representation for members of the committee, with voting by ballot at the shops, instead of at the quarterly meeting, as was the case previously; (3) The members of the committee to be eligible for re-election at the end of each year's service, instead of having to retire compulsorily for three months after having served four years.

The following additional branch shops have been opened on the dates named:—Wigan-road, grocery, April, 1897; Culcheth, grocery, July, 1897; Railway-road, grocery and butchering, February, 1898; Bolton-road, Atherton, grocery, May, 1899; Church-street, Golborne, grocery, May, 1900; Hope-street, grocery and butchering, September, 1900, Outfitting, April, 1901; Firs-lane (Barker-street), grocery, drapery and clog and shoe, April, 1901; Plank Lane Bridge, grocery, August, 1901; Tyldesley-road (Dan-lane), Atherton, grocery, August, 1901; Howbridge, grocery and butchering, September, 1901; Golborne (Legh-street), grocery, October, 1902; Gin Pits, grocery, August, 1903; Henry-street, grocery, August, 1903.

The old premises at Church-street, Atherton, were demolished in 1899, and the present grocery and drapery shops erected.

The business at Glazebury was removed in March, 1902, from the old premises previously rented, to a handsome shop erected by the society on the opposite side of the street.

In the same way, at Culcheth, the business has been removed to a commodious shop, purchased by the society in June, 1906.

The present handsome and extensive offices, with committee room and waiting rooms on the ground floor, and a large meeting room and ante-rooms over, were completed in June, 1903.

PLANK LANE BRIDGE BRANCH
(Commenced 1901).

HOWBRIDGE BRANCH
(Commenced 1901).

GIN PITS BRANCH
(Commenced 1903).

HENRY STREET BRANCH
(Commenced 1903).

OFFICES, ELLESMERE STREET
(Opened 1902).

The small savings bank was commenced in August, 1903, and there are at the present time nearly 900 depositors, having to their credit the sum of nearly £2,000.

Another important addition to the society's premises is the cold stores and pork butchering department. This department is under the management of Mr. Henry Pegg, who has also had charge of the entire butchering department during the past two years, in succession to Mr. J. Bardsley.

A large new bakery department, fitted up with the latest draw-plate ovens and kneading and moulding machinery, is expected to be completed in time for the Jubilee celebrations.

The corn mill has once again been extended and fitted up with the latest machinery, the entire cost of which is being paid for out of a reserve fund specially accumulated for the purpose.

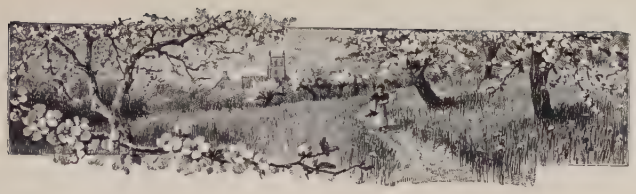
The society now consists of over 10,000 members, with share capital amounting to £150,000. There are thirty-five grocery shops, fourteen butchering, six clog and shoe, six drapery, one outfitting, one tailoring and one confectionery; or a total of sixty-four shops. The total sales at the shops during the year 1906 was £323,665, and at the corn mill £61,423. The society also employs 410 workpeople, and the amount of wages paid for last year was £24,633.

There can be little doubt that, had it not been for the severe check the society received in connection with the weaving department, the Leigh Society would to-day, in all probability, have rivalled in size and business many of the societies in the largest towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Corn Mill, Depot, Bakery, &c., 1907.

First Row - John Doyle. John Ed. Bardsley. Luke Hunter. Simeon Hayes.
Second Row - Alfred Lee, *Secretary*. William Bellamy, *Chairman*. Samuel Lowe.

EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE, JUNE, 1907.



CHAPTER XVIII.

The Educational Department and Women's Guild.

"'Tis Education forms the common mind,
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

A FEW words in connection with the educational department and the women's guild will bring to a close this brief and somewhat discursive record of the society's history.

The commencement of the reading-room in the attic in Newton-street; its removal to the shop in Bradshaw-gate, afterwards the old drapery shop, and again to the room over the grocery shop at the corner of Albion-street; the incorporation of the books from the old Mechanics' Institution, and the arrangements made for the use of the reading-room and library by the general public, for a very nominal fee, have already been told. A statement of the yearly grants made from the general profits is given at the end of the book.

Up to 1895 the educational department was carried on by a sub-committee from the general committee. In 1900, and again in 1901, the rules were altered, and from this date the educational department has been managed by a separate committee elected by the members. Since the end of 1895 a fixed grant of 1 per cent has been allotted out of the profits to the educational department. For the year 1896 the total allowance amounted to £256, and for 1906, £494. As no

charge is made to the department for rent of rooms, rates, taxes and other expenses, which together will represent an amount of nearly £200, the total allowance to the department is equal at the present time to about £700 per annum.

With the gradually increasing grant from the general profits, the educational committee have extended the field of their labours. During the past two years about £120 has been spent on the library, which now contains about 3,000 volumes. Arrangements have also been made for supplying the members at the distant branches with books from the library.

In addition to the large reading-room at the central, there are also reading-rooms at the following branches, viz.:—Culcheth, Glazebury, Golborne, Hindley Green, Physic and Lowton; preparations are also being made for an additional one at Tyldesley.

A monthly *Record* is also published and given out free to the members at a cost of about £120 per annum. During the winter season, lectures, concerts, &c., are arranged for all the distant branches, as well as at the central. In the summer, botanical rambles, picnics, &c., are arranged, the result being a splendid propagandist work on behalf of the society, as well as helping to keep the members well in touch with the work of the society.

For some years, classes in dressmaking, ambulance work, &c., have been carried on very successfully; during the winter of 1906-7 the committee have been trying the experiment of paying half fees to students attending classes at the Leigh Technical Schools, and about £60 has been paid in this way.

The following have been the librarians from the commencement:—Mr. Joshua Cleworth, up to 1865; Mr. James Abbott, September, 1865, to May, 1866; Mr. George Midgley, May, 1866, to March, 1879; Mr. Thomas Boydell, March, 1879, to February, 1884; Mr. James Dumbill, February, 1884, to October, 1891; Mr. James Howarth, October, 1891, to December, 1899; Mr. Alfred Lee, December, 1899, to present day. Mr. Lee has also acted as secretary to the educational

committee since 1899, and at the present time is editor of the *Monthly Record*.

The women's guild was commenced on October 13th, 1896. On that date Miss Reddish and Mrs. Child, of the Bolton Guild, and Mrs. Tootill, of Horwich, addressed a well-attended meeting, Mr. John Smith, the president, being chairman, and it was thereupon resolved to commence a branch at Leigh. Mrs. Oldham was appointed president, Mrs. W. T. Prescott treasurer, and Mrs. Peter Rimmer secretary; these, along with Mesdames Charleson, Makin, Lee and Fazakerly, formed the first committee.

It was arranged to pay a subscription of 1s. per year and to meet fortnightly. Lectures, essays, sewing classes, concerts and children's parties are the principal features in the work carried on by the members of the guild.

Successive presidents of the guild have been Mesdames Oldham, Wetton, Charleson, Tonge, Walton, Southern, Hayes. Secretaries: Mrs. Rimmer, Miss Smith (Mrs. Thomason), Mrs. Isgar, Mrs. Urmston, Miss Hart and Mrs. M. Thomason. Treasurers: Mrs. W. T. Prescott, Mrs. Holt, Miss Hart, Mrs. Robinson.

On the marriage of Miss Smith, the members of the guild presented her with a handsome tea service, in recognition of her work as secretary. Branches of the guild are also held at Howbridge and Golborne.

It is an old saying that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," and it would be equally true to say that the hand that carries the provision basket, to a large extent at any rate, rules the co-operative movement.

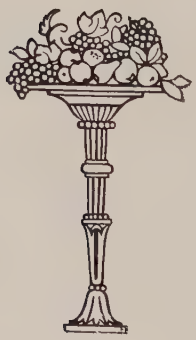
There are no suffragette agitations in connection with the co-operative movement; all members have equal privileges in every department of the business of the societies.

And now, in conclusion, let the members see to it that they make the most of the grand institution which they have, after many and severe trials, built up. The possibilities for further progress and improvement are almost boundless. The whole matter rests entirely

with the members themselves, and the more loyal they are to their own institution, the greater will be the measure of success and the greater the benefits which will accrue to every individual member of the society.

"One ploughs, another sows;
Who will reap no one knows."

"We ought not to look back, unless it is to derive useful lessons, from past errors, and for the purpose of profiting by dear-bought experience."



STATEMENT SHOWING PROGRESS OF SOCIETY FROM COMMENCEMENT.

Year.	Members.	Share Capital.	Sales.		Average Dividend.		Total Paid.		Grant to Education.
			Shops.	Corn Mill.†	Shops.	Corn Mill.	Dividend.‡	Interest on Shares.	
		£	£	£	s. d.	s. d.	£	£	£
1857 (½ year) .	78	119	94	..	2 0	..	10	..	..
1858.....	280	922	6387	..	1 2½	..	269	31	..
1859.....	557	2847	11054	..	1 4½	..	593	77	7
1860.....	739	5574	18968	..	1 1¾	..	940	242	10
1861.....	806	7012	18552	..	1 0½	..	853	338	10
1862.....	1005	8873	21478	..	1 4¼	..	1244	416	27
1863.....	1357	13702	24732	..	1 5½	..	1527	615	31
1864.....	1664	19393	31512	12565	1 6	0 7¾	1964	875	40
1865.....	1812	21104	33889	13665	1 4¾	0 8¾	2066	1107	31
1866.....	2028	24385	39883	17659	1 6¾	0 11¾	2605	1185	37
1867.....	2205	28009	48206	22418	1 3¾	1 0	2867	1373	42
1868.....	2215	29658	46605	21136	0 11	0 9½	1798	1502	30
1869.....	2150	27856	37970	18746	0 11¼	0 1½	1443	1486	10
1870.....	2178	31023	36533	26293	1 7½	0 3¾	2427	1483	43
1871.....	2401	37657	45607	40572	1 8	0 3¾	3226	1776	54
1872.....	2502	43668	51806	43072	1 7¾	0 1½	3827	2082	57
1873.....	2804	53680	60314	51258	1 9	0 3¾	4838	2495	81
1874.....	2936	62204	64246	28742	1 6¼	..	4562	2976	63
1875.....	3052	62487	71641	22096	1 9½	0 1¾	6012	3207	77
1876.....	3314	70303	82004	25021	1 11	0 3¼	7366	3419	93
1877.....	3407	65587	83618	27811	1 11¾	0 7¼	8023	3230	109
1878.....	3558	67291	84460	26784	1 10½	0 3	8001	3308	105
1879.....	3416	63870	70287	22306	1 7	0 6¼	5953	3209	89
1880.....	3271	63592	66847	20825	1 5½	0 7¾	4989	3222	63
1881.....	3072	66428	70458	20207	1 2¼	0 4	6686	3070	42
1882.....	3096	66166	65409	19304	1 1¼	0 4	3663	2660	29

† Includes Goods Supplied to Own Shops. ‡ Dividend Transferred to General Department from Corn Mill not included.

PROGRESS OF SOCIETY—*Continued.*

Year.	Members.	Share Capital.	Sales.		Average Dividend.		Total Paid.		Grant to Education.
			Shops.	Corn Mill.†	Shops.	Corn Mill.	Dividend.‡	Interest on Shares.	
		£	£	£	s. d.	s. d.	£	£	£
1883.....	3201	66689	64218	17518	1 6¾	0 6¾	5116	2691	19
1884.....	3460	65702	70827	17822	1 10⅓	0 6¾	6779	2736	18
1885.....	3603	62016	69455	15944	1 8¾	0 5¼	6190	2677	23
1886.....	3498	57531	57291	13154	1 7¼	0 2¼	4654	2479	27
1887.....	3420	57242	57230	13617	1 10	0 1	5287	2409	39
1888.....	3660	59733	64507	33206	1 11½	0 3½	6435	2541	37
1889.....	3751	58437	60899	31889	1 7½	..	5062	2609	41
1890.....	3971	56839	62374	46183	1 10¾	0 0¾	5623	2498	34
1891.....	4634	61251	87433	53171	2 6	0 2¼	10364	2616	32
1892.....	5189	68332	113476	60371	2 6	0 4	13995	2924	62
1893.....	5485	75673	115909	45327	2 6	0 2¼	14165	3318	39
1894.....	6018	87061	132694	46575	2 7½	0 3¾	17192	3864	50
1895.....	6247	82377	152345	44041	2 11½	0 3¾	22136	3855	41
1896.....	6576	93514	166825	56475	3 0	0 6	24937	3936	256
1897.....	7091	108737	181598	60234	3 0	0 6¾	27423	4521	275
1898.....	7446	117464	197356	71183	3 0	0 5	29753	5119	298
1899.....	7914	130173	210127	65597	3 0	0 9¾	32174	5508	317
1900.....	8566	140518	245966	77123	3 0	0 7¼	37416	5852	365
1901.....	8571	147620	270387	76281	3 0	0 6¾	41123	5250	305
1902.....	9328	164937	307871	80248	3 0	0 11¼	47192	5552	471
1903.....	9721	169248	328544	81561	3 0	0 6¾	49629	5682	484
1904.....	9857	167680	312331	69084	3 0	0 5¼	46612	5807	478
1905*.....	9848	147964	335945	69500	3 0	0 3	49497	5795	460
1906.....	9956	149791	323755	61422	3 0	0 3	47619	5485	149
1907 (½ year) .	10225	155473	178106	30461	3 0	0 3	..	..	494

* 55 weeks. † Includes Goods Supplied to Own Shops. ‡ Dividend Transferred to General Department from Corn Mill not included. Education Grant does not include Rent of Rooms and Other Expenses amounting to nearly £200 per year.

LIST OF OFFICIALS.

PRESIDENTS.

Enoch Holt	1857 to 1864
William Boydell	1864 ,, 1865
Henry Brooks	1865 ,, 1867
William Clarke	1867 ½ year
Robert Leather	1867 to 1882
Ralph Eckersley	1882 ,, 1883
Henry Duddle	1883 ,, 1889
Peter Hodson	1889 ,, 1893
John Smith	from 1893

SECRETARIES.

Richard Birchall, Jun.	1857 to 1858
William Hill	1858 ,, 1881
Thomas Boydell	from 1881

AUDITORS.

William Hill Richard Hindley Richard Flitcroft	1858
Peter Ward	1859
William Lee	1859 to 1864
David Grundy	1859 ,, 1863
William Taylor	1861 ,, 1862
George Dickinson	1863
George Parr	1863 ,, 1881
Edward Ranicar	1864 ,, 1873
Henry Gerrard	1873 ,, 1881
John R. Boydell	1873
William Appleby	from 1881
Thomas Wood	,, 1885

MANAGERS.

General :

Adam Smith	1858 to 1868
William Dickinson	1868 ,, 1889
Henry Duddle	from 1889

Corn Mill :

John Pritchard	1863 to 1869
Valentine Farrington	1869 ,, 1872
John Fothergill	1872 ,, 1874
Thomas Simpson	1874 ,, 1879
Joseph Wyatt	1879 ,, 1890
William Hurt	1890 ,, 1896
John Collins	from 1896

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